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Annals of the
English Benedictines
of Ghent.

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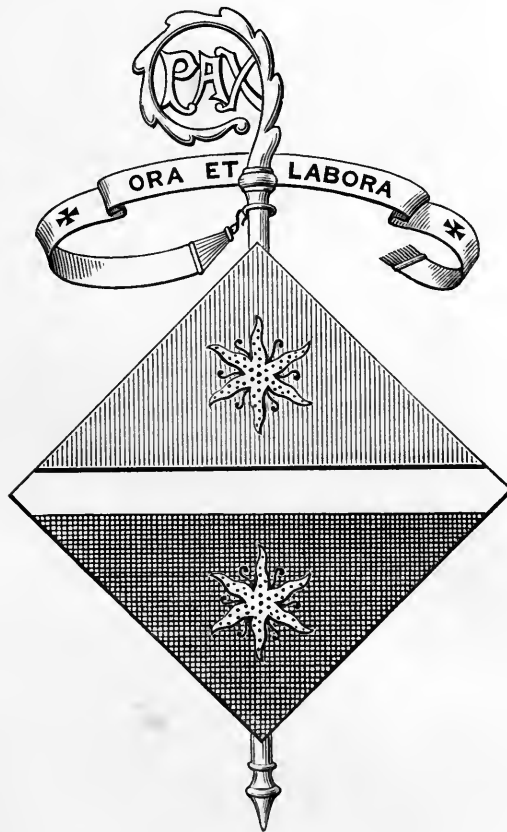
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ENGLISH BENEDICTINE ABBEY AT GHENT.
[Frontispiece.]

ANNALS
OF THE
ENGLISH BENEDICTINES
OF GHENT.



NOW AT

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SANCTE PATER BENEDICTE
MONACHALIS FAMILIÆ PATRIARCHA ET DUX,
QUEM INIQUITAS TEMPORUM SEDEM MUTARE
OLIM COEGIT
RESPICERE DIGNARE PUSILLUM GREGEM SANCTIMONIALIUM
APUD OULTON, PRO CHRISTO, TE DUCE, MILITANTIUM,
QUEM PARI CONATU, SÆVA IMPIETAS
E SEDIBUS ANTIQUIS, CENTUM ABHINC ANNIS, EXTURBAVIT,
QUEMQUE TELLUS ANGLICANA
LÆTA SUSCEPIT.
FAC, PROINDE, PRÆPOTENTI PATROCINIO TUO
UT ANCILLÆ TUÆ
ANGUSTAM SALUTIS VIAM TERENTES,
CHRISTI BONUM ODOREM LONGE LATEQUE SPARGANT,
ATQUE ANTECESSORUM SANCTORUM PIAS TRADITIONES SERVANTES,
POSTERIS INTEGRÉ TRADANT:
ET IPSÆ TANDEM
INTER OVANTES CHOROS PROLIS TUÆ INNUMERÆ
FELICITER COLLOCARI MEREANTUR.



INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages were originally destined merely for the use of our own community, but as it was found that they would be of interest to a wider circle, it was decided to give them their present form. The want of completeness which may be found here and there in the narrative is accounted for by the fact that when our sisters hurriedly left Ghent at the time of the French Revolution, a considerable number of their records and valuable papers was left behind and never afterwards recovered. The writing of a history has therefore been attended by some disadvantages, though efforts have been made (and with considerable success) to supply the deficiency by a recourse to the Episcopal Archives of Ghent, where many valuable original documents relating to our Monastery have been discovered. Our readers will observe that the period which is the most deficient in a consecutive history is the latter half of the eighteenth century, the documents of that time being the most scarce. Amongst the records which were saved by the community, one of the most valuable is the MS. Life of Lady Lucy Knatchbull, our first Abbess, written by Sir Toby Matthews, S.J., who, while residing in the house of the English Jesuits at Ghent, was a frequent visitor at our Monastery, and was personally acquainted with the four foundresses and some of their companions. The date of this MS. is 1652. We may count amongst our greatest losses the original letters of King Charles II. and his brother James II. to Lady Mary Knatchbull, who governed our community from A.D. 1650 to her death in 1696. Of these there was a considerable number, which probably contained many additions to history that will never now be known; for it is certain that details of the conversion of James II. (which took place at Ghent) and of the restoration of Charles II. were there entered into.

We take this opportunity of expressing our thanks to the kind friends who have rendered us such valuable assistance in our researches; especially Mrs. Tempest of Coleby Hall, who placed at our disposal some valuable notes and letters of the members of the Tempest family who were nuns at Ghent; and a complete family pedigree. We would mention also as kind contributors Mr. Joseph Gillow, M. de Potter of Ghent, Mr. Everard Green F.S.A., and the Rev. Bernard Ward, who undertook two journeys to Ghent in our behalf. Our sisters at St. Mary's Abbey, East Bergholt, and St. Scholastica's Abbey, Teignmouth, have earned our thanks by the assistance they have rendered by reference

to their own records and in other ways. Our gratitude is also due to Mr. Granville Ward, whose generosity has defrayed the expenses of the printing of our work.

Our community has now been established in England for the space of a century, during which it has gone through many vicissitudes. By God's goodness it still exists in spite of all its former difficulties, and we may even say that as regards the temporalities it has in a great measure outlived those difficulties.

We venture to hope that this history, written with feelings of affectionate respect and gratitude to the memory of those who have gone before us, may serve as an encouragement to their children and successors to maintain their traditions and walk in their footsteps.

St. Mary's Abbey, Oulton,

June 30th, 1894.

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ANNALS

OF THE

ENGLISH BENEDICTINES OF GHENT.

BOOK THE FIRST.

FOUNDATION AND EARLY DAYS.

A.D. 1624 TO 1650.



THE history of the Religious Houses founded on the Continent for British subjects during the period of religious persecution in England may be said to form an integral part of the Ecclesiastical history of this country. These houses form a sort of connecting link between Catholic England and the much changed England of modern times. Having been peopled and supported

Religious
Houses for
British
Subjects on
the Continent.

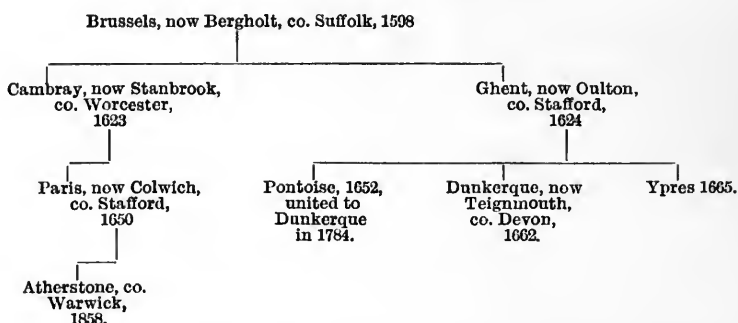
mainly by the members of ancient families which had never lost the faith, the old English Catholic traditions were nourished and kept up, and have been handed down even to us their successors. The lists of names which have been preserved in most of these monasteries show the connection which existed by ties of blood between their peaceful inmates and those who took part in the more active and stirring scenes in this country. The number of Howards, Giffards, Petres, Bedingfelds, Carylls, Jerninghams, Tempests, Cliffords, Corbys, Poultons, Lawsons, &c., &c., who were nuns may be equalled by the Jesuit, Benedictine and secular missionaries of the same names; and there can be no doubt that while the latter laboured, suffered, and even died for the propagation of the true faith in their native country, the former contributed with their heartfelt and earnest prayers to the same great object, and thus all worked in concert for the good of their fellow-countrymen. The interesting group of monasteries to which we allude forms a varied collection as regards order and rule. Benedictines, Canonesses of two branches, Dominicans, Poor Clares, Franciscans and Carmelites are all represented amongst them, and it is an edifying proof of the piety of our ancestors to note how promptly after the fall of religion in England these religious foundations abroad were begun, and how, when once begun, they continued to increase and prosper.

When the French Revolution spread terror throughout France and the Netherlands, nearly all the communities returned to England* and settled in various parts of the country. They had, of course, their troubles, difficulties, and vicissitudes, but by God's

* The Benedictines of Ypres and the Austin Canonesses of Bruges and Neuilly are still in the places where they were first established. The nuns of Bruges came to England in 1794, but returned when the storm had lulled, and the two other communities succeeded in remaining in their homes throughout the Revolution,

goodness all, or nearly all, survived these. Two or three communities indeed (as the Conceptionists from Paris and the Poor Clares from Dunkerque)* died out soon after their arrival in this country from want of members, but the great majority are still existing and flourishing on their native soil.

The narrative which we are now presenting to our readers is the history of our own community, namely the Benedictine Abbey of the Immaculate Conception, founded at Ghent in 1624, by four members of the community at Brussels, which latter was the first of all those established for English ladies after the great schism in our country. This house at Brussels (now represented by the community of East Bergholt) was the parent of all the old English convents of our Order now in existence, as the following diagram will show. The dates given are those of foundation.



The houses of Cambray and Paris were, from the beginning, under the jurisdiction of the Anglo-Benedictine President.† The other five formerly considered themselves as constituting a congregation, which, however, was not strictly the case, as they were not under a common superior, but each abbess was independent of the others and subject only to the Bishop of the Diocese. All, however, observed the same statutes and customs. Of late years two of the number (those of East Bergholt and Teignmouth) have adopted the constitutions and the head-dress of the French nuns recently established at Solesmes by Dom Guéranger, which has caused the similarity amongst them to be lessened. They still have, however, many old customs in common, and have always kept up the mutual sisterly intercourse prescribed by the old statutes. The Monastery of Ghent, now settled close to the picturesque village of Oulton among the hills of Staffordshire, preserves in its new home most of the old traditions of its foundresses, including the care of a school for the education of young ladies, though this latter is of course now modelled on the requirements of the present day. It has passed through many vicissitudes, but its inmates still continue the calm peaceful life which was pursued by their predecessors at Ghent. In order to relate its history aright, we must first give a brief sketch of the foundation of the parent house.

* The Conceptionists or "Blue Nuns" came to England at the time of the Revolution very few in number, and settled in Norwich, but in a short time they were all extinct. The Poor Clares of Dunkerque settled at Church Hill near Worcester, but at last dwindled down to two or three members who joined the community at Scorton (now at Darlington), which house represents the four of Gravelines, Rouen, Dunkerque, and Aire.

† The community of Paris (now Colwich) are no longer affiliated to the Anglo-Benedictine congregation. As early as the year 1653 they were placed under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of the Diocese.

The English Monastery at Brussels was founded in the year 1598 by Lady Mary Percy, daughter to Thomas, Earl of Northumberland, who wished to give herself to God in our holy Order, and was unable to do so in her own country where every religious house had been broken up and its members dispersed, and where all Catholics were suffering a cruel persecution. The first abbess of this monastery was Dame Joanna Berkeley,* whom Lady Percy had invited from St. Peter's Abbey at Rheims, where she had for some years professed the religious life, to train up herself and her companions in the same. Lady Joanna received the Abbatial Benediction on the 14th of November, 1599. The following year Lady Mary Percy with seven other ladies and four lay-sisters made their profession, and the community was now fairly established. Ladies from England came in considerable numbers to swell this little family, and the French nuns who had accompanied Lady Berkeley from Rheims returned as soon as the convent was sufficiently numerous.

1598.

The Brussels Monastery.

1599.

1600.

It was on the 12th of May, 1601, that the Lady Abbess received the profession of Dame Eugenia Poulton or Pulton† and nearly ten years later, on the 11th of January, 1611, those of Dames Lucy Knatchbull and Magdalene Digby. Again, eight years after this, in 1619, Dame Mary Roper was professed. These four religious dames were the foundresses of our Monastery at Ghent, and we will therefore give here a slight sketch of them.

1601.

1611.

Dame Lucy Elizabeth Knatchbull, as first abbess and principal foundress, merits the chief place. She was the daughter of Reynold or Reginald Knatchbull, Esq.,‡ and his wife, Anne Crispe, whose father, William Crispe, Esq., had been in high favour both with Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, and had held the post of Governor of Dover Castle, which post, however, he resigned under the latter sovereign, on account of the difficult situation in which his religion placed him. The Knatchbulls were an ancient family, settled for many generations in the county of Kent, the principal family seat being Mersham Hatch, where Richard Knatchbull, Dame Lucy's uncle, resided. This, our first abbess appears, in her youth, to have had some love for the world, and when, at the age of seventeen, she first felt inspired to enter religion, it cost her a severe struggle to give it up. At the end of three years, however, grace won the mastery, and she presented herself to the Monastery at Brussels, where she was received as a postulant, or "scholar," as they termed it at that time. At first the religious life appeared to her very irksome, but a spiritual retreat, which she made soon after her entrance, gave her great light and help, and from that time she set herself with great earnestness to the acquiring of religious virtue, and even in this her first year, God on one occasion granted her a supernatural favour after Holy Communion, as may be read§ in her "death-bill."|| Soon after this some friends, who were probably Jesuit fathers, persuaded her and Dame Magdalene Digby, with a few others (all novices or scholars at the time)

Dame Lucy Knatchbull.

* Dame Joanna Berkeley was the daughter of Sir John Berkeley, of Beverston Castle, near Tetbury, in Gloucestershire. She was professed at Rheims, on the 6th December, 1581. (See Gillow's "Biographical Dictionary," vol. I., page 201).

† See Appendix II., No. 1. ‡ See Appendix II., No. 2. § See Appendix I., No. 1.

|| It may be well to explain, for the sake of those who are unacquainted with our customs, that the "death-bills" of our sisters are accounts, more or less lengthened, of their general history and principal virtues. They are compiled soon after the death of each member.

1611.

to leave the monastery in order to undertake a new foundation, apparently at Liège or St. Omer. The chief reason given for this scheme was that a report had reached them that the spiritual direction of the Society of Jesus, which the nuns of Brussels enjoyed, was likely to be wholly or in part given up. Dame Lucy and her companions accordingly left the monastery; but every plan for the new foundation failed, and evidently God's good time had not yet come. The Jesuits then tried to persuade them to found a house of Teresians, but Dame Lucy's inclinations were utterly opposed to every Order but that of our Holy Father St. Benedict, and she could not bring herself to enter into this scheme. At last she and Dame Magdalene Digby resolved to return to Brussels and beg for re-admittance. The superiors there had not been pleased with their project, but they nevertheless received them again with a good grace, and promised to forget the past. What became of their companions we are not told. From this time Dame Lucy went on with great zeal and fervour, and was duly professed in 1611. In 1616 she was elected Thourier, and in 1619 Celleraire,* which office she was still holding when the Ghent foundation was first thought of.

Dame Eugenia
Poulton.

The next of our foundresses, Dame Eugenia Jane Poulton, was older in religion than any of the others. She was professed at Brussels in 1601, being the daughter of Ferdinand Poulton, Esq., of Desborough Hall, in Northamptonshire, a gentleman of a very good and ancient family. She was a holy and capable woman, and whilst at Brussels held the offices of Guardrobe, Procuratrix, Celleraire, Dean, and Prioress,† which last office she was actually holding when the removal to Ghent took place; and on the arrival there, she became the first Novice-mistress of the rising community. Of her actions as second abbess of our monastery we shall speak later.

Dame
Magdalene
Digby.

Dame Magdalene Elizabeth Digby was the daughter of Everard Digby, Esq.,‡ of Tilton, in Leicestershire, and sister of Sir Everard Digby, Knight, who was beheaded for his share in the Gunpowder Plot. She was about twenty-two years old when she left her own country with Dame Lucy Knatchbull to enter at Brussels, and is said to have been remarkably tall and handsome (as most of her family were), pleasing, lively, and spirited. She was clothed together with Dame Lucy, on the 29th of December, 1609, and professed on the 11th of January, 1611. Dame Magdalene was afterwards named Sacristan, then Chantress, and lastly Dean, which office she held when, in 1624, she removed to Ghent with the others. She may be considered to have been, in a manner, the prime mover of this new foundation, for she was the first to be specially inspired to found a house dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Our Blessed Lady. It is said that she remarked one day playfully to Dame Lucy Knatchbull, "I must have you an abbess of the Immaculate Conception before I die." She placed this affair especially in the hands of St. Joseph, and trusted in his powerful protection to accomplish it. And so it came to pass that she lived to see all well effected, and nearly a hundred members

* The Thourier was the official who had the charge of the "grate" and attended to the visitors of the monastery. In England (where we have no grate) these duties are supplied by the guest-mistress. The Celleraire presides in the kitchen and is the Superior of the lay-sisters.

† The Prioress is the next in authority to the abbess. After her stand the Deans, who are looked upon as the Ancients of the monastery. The Guardrobe has charge of the clothing, and the Procuratrix, or Depositary, of the purse and temporal affairs of the community.

‡ See Appendix II., No. 3.

received in the new house, was the only one of the four foundresses who was never abbess, outlived all the other three, and at last died the death of a saint, after having edified the community many years by her holy life and her admirable patience under suffering.

Dame Mary Roper, or Rooper (as it was then spelt), was the daughter of Lord Christopher Roper, 2nd Baron of Tenham or Teynham,* and was born at Linstead Lodge, in Kent. She made her profession at Brussels, on the 10th of November, 1619, and was a promising and fervent young religious when she was called upon to join the little colony to Ghent, of which monastery she was eventually chosen third Abbess. As we shall have occasion to speak of her at some length later on, we need not here say more, but we will proceed to relate the manner in which the establishment of our house at Ghent came about.

Dame
Mary Roper.

The monastery at Brussels was founded in 1598, and was the first that had been established for English religious women since the great schism in their own country, and hence it soon became well-known and was much sought after. In the course of a few years, the community became so numerous that (the buildings not being very extensive) they seemed likely to fall short of space as well as means, and many persons began to think of sending out a colony to some other town in the Low Countries. Sir Toby Matthews, in his "Life of Lady Lucy Knatchbull," thus describes these circumstances:

"But then the Howse begann to fill, and so the Body grew too bigg for the Cloaths; and in multitudes, and especially of Women, all like not easily to be of one Dictamen, or humour, insomuch as that (for severall respects) divers persons of great vertue and worth in that Company grew to be of opinion that it would be of no small service to Almighty God nor of inconsiderable good to the preservation of true Spirit even in that very Howse itselfe, if some little colony or two of the Religious might be gently drawne out from thence and placed in some other citty of the same country; whereby the primitive Spirit of that first Monastery might be a little contracted and kept perfet still, and so the Order also in which they lived might grow by that good meanes to be enlarged.

"This thought and first conceipt was particularly recommended to Almighty God by many Prayers and Masses, both of divers of the Religious themselves, as also by the wisest and devoutest friends whom they had abroad; and the more they thought heerof, the better did they like the designe. The rather because in England there were found divers hopeful and worthy persons who desired to consecrate themselves then to God, in a Religious State under the same Rule of the glorious St Bennett. But yet, either upon certain rumours, or else upon good reasons, they inclined and much more desired to procure a new Plantation then to continue in the old. And I have heard (though I know not how true it was) that there grew to be a conceipt, or at least a pretty loud kind of whisper, as if their Superiours of that time had a mind to make themselves wiser (at least in their owne opinion) then they had been before, and so to change the hand under which they had been happy till then, and this both in the temporall and in the spirituall way."

Project of
a new
foundation.

* See Appendix II., No. 4.

1622.

At this time Rev. Father John Norton *alias* Knatchbull, S.J.,* Dame Lucy's brother, was the confessor at Brussels, and he, amongst others, was very active in planning a new foundation, in which matter his knowledge of the Spanish tongue and acquaintance with influential persons in Flanders made him a very useful auxiliary.

1623.

For two years the matter was talked of and discussed in a very quiet way, for even the Lady Abbess knew nothing about it,† and the only members of the community who were in the secret were the four who were planning it, namely, Dame Eugenia Poulton, the Mother Prioress, Dame Magdalene Digby, Dean, Dame Lucy Knatchbull, Celleraire, and Dame Mary Roper, and these four were very zealous in the matter, thinking that its success would redound greatly to the glory of God. Father Norton wrote letters to friends in England on whose assistance they might rely; and after some time it was thought best to speak to the Archbishop of Mechlin, the Ordinary of the Convent. He immediately came to the monastery, and held a conference with the Lady Abbess. She fully entered into the design and approved of it, but did not approve of the choice of the four religious who were to form the colony. She was perhaps unwilling to part with them all, for they were, Sir Toby Matthews tells us, "the very flower of the Howse." Accordingly she proposed others, but the four who had planned the work earnestly begged the archbishop to insist upon their being allowed to begin their undertaking themselves. At first the archbishop himself was as unwilling as the abbess to lose these four nuns, but at last he allowed himself to be persuaded, and had a second conference with Lady Mary Percy, who this time was more ready to yield than had been expected, thinking that it would be better for them to go than to remain against their will, and so it was finally decided that they should be allowed to carry out their project. About this time a letter arrived most opportunely from a man of position and influence in England, stating that several ladies of fortune were desirous of joining this new colony, which had already been spoken of by Father Knatchbull and his friends. It is probable that this circumstance had considerable weight with the archbishop, and finally induced him to give his consent. He moreover determined that now the matter was finally settled, the sooner it was put into execution the better, as he had some apprehensions lest it should cause other members of the Brussels community to be dissatisfied or unsettled. So he made all diligence to procure the necessary licenses from the King of Spain (to whose dominion Flanders was then subject) and the Bishop of Ghent, this being the town on which they had fixed for the foundation. The former was procured by two ladies called Radcliffe,‡ who were thinking of joining the new community. We give elsewhere the text of the

* Norton appears to have been a family name with the Knatchbills. The first baronet of that family (Dame Lucy's cousin) was called Sir Norton Knatchbull, and several other members bore the same name. Fr. John Norton Knatchbull probably used his second name as an *alias*, which at that time was a common practice among English priests.

† The reasons for this somewhat strange secrecy about the new foundation may be explained as follows. The monastery at Brussels, at this time, was not entirely free from the differences of opinion so unfortunately prevalent among English Catholics of the period. Lady Mary Percy (who had become abbess, A.D. 1616) conceived the wish to place her monastery under the jurisdiction of the Anglo-Benedictine President, instead of that of the Ordinary of the diocese, as the statutes directed, thus of course putting an end to the spiritual direction of the Jesuits. In this scheme she met with much opposition from members of the community, and it was finally put an end to by the court of Rome, on an appeal made against it by the Dean and Chapter of Mechlin. Our four foundresses were among the opponents to Lady Percy's scheme, so they naturally did not like to refer their own project to her until it promised somewhat of success, lest it should be nipped in the bud.

‡ These ladies never joined our community. It is probable that one of them was identical with the Margaret Radcliffe, who became a Poor Clare at Gravelines, under the name of Sister Margaret of St. Paul, and was subsequently first abbess of the house at Aire, founded from Gravelines in 1629.

September.

license.* The archbishop also applied to the Infanta Isabella, who sent letters to the magistrates of Ghent, recommending the new convent to them, while one from the prelate himself was addressed to the Bishop of Ghent on the same subject. These letters were conveyed by the Dean of Ghent, an Englishman called George Chamberlain.† Another person who gave great assistance was a Mr. Colford, a kinsman of one of the Brussels community, Dame Martha Colford. The grant having been finally obtained,‡ the next thing to be done was to find a house in Ghent to serve as a temporary shelter for the little colony, and Mr. Colford went to Ghent himself with explicit injunctions to take some house that would serve as a residence before returning. However, in this he had great difficulty, in spite of the help given him by the dean; and at last he was on the point of giving it up in despair, when he accidentally met with one of the burghers of the town, who told him he had a house to let. Mr. Colford went to see it, but found it very small and inconvenient. However, in the emergency, he thought it best to take it on a lease of two years, in the hope that in the meantime something better would present itself. All was now arranged, and in the beginning of the year 1624 a dismissorial letter was procured from the Archbishop of Mechlin, authorising Dames Lucy Knatchbull, Eugenia Pulton, Magdalene Digby, and Mary Roper to make the new foundation, and recommending them to the Bishop of Ghent. He also named Dame Lucy provisional superior, and stipulated expressly that nothing whatever was to be taken with them from the house of their profession at Brussels except what the abbess and community should choose to give them.§ Thus our four loved and venerated mothers left Brussels in truly apostolical poverty, and although the new members who joined them brought in fortunes, they continued for many years to suffer the inconveniences of limited means.

It was on a Friday, the 16th of January, 1624, that the four religious left Brussels, accompanied by a novice, Sister Elizabeth Bradbury, kinswoman to Dame Eugenia, and a lay-novice, Sister Lucy Bacon, who had formerly been Sister Elizabeth's maid. The community at Brussels parted from them affectionately and with much regret, and continued to be very sensible of the loss of such excellent and capable members.

They reached Ghent the following day, where they were received very kindly, the magistrates having had notice of their coming. They went to the little house which Mr. Colford had procured for them, where a grate had been put up and a temporary choir arranged beforehand. The next day, which was Sunday, and the feast of St. Peter's Chair at Rome, Father Norton said Mass in their poor little chapel, and after this Mr. Colford took the archbishop's letter to the Bishop of Ghent, who immediately confirmed Dame Lucy in the office of superior until he should be able to preside at the election of

* See Appendix I., No. 2.

† George Chamberlain was the son of Geo. Chamberlain, Esq., who was living in exile at Ghent, and his wife, Mary Pring, a native of that town. His grandfather, Sir Leonard Chamberlain, had been Governor of the Isle of Guernsey, and died in the reign of Elizabeth. George Chamberlain became a priest early in life, and his brilliant talents soon met with recognition. He was made successively Canon, Archdeacon and Dean of St. Bavon's in Ghent, and in 1626, was consecrated Bishop of Ypres. He was a man of the highest integrity, and was everywhere respected. It is said that he could preach in five different languages, and with great eloquence. He died Dec. 19, 1634, aged 58. (See Gillow's "Dictionary of English Catholics," Vol. I., page 457.)

‡ It is worthy of note that during this very year, 1623, in which the arrangements for our foundation were being made, the Brussels community were actually sending out another colony to be under the jurisdiction of the Anglo-Benedictine monks. This community settled at Cambrai, and is the same as that now at Stanbrook, near Worcester.

§ See Appendix I., No. 3.

1624.

an abbess. His lordship was obliged to defer his first visit to these his new children because Dean Chamberlain was out of town, and he required an interpreter, since he did not know English, and the nuns did not speak his language. As soon as the Dean returned he accompanied the Bishop to the convent, and they had a very satisfactory interview with the nuns, the Bishop giving them a warm welcome and shewing them great kindness. The following morning he came again, said the mass of the Holy Ghost, and, in company with the dean, presided at the election of the abbess. The votes were centred on Dame Lucy Knatchbull, as might have been expected. It was thought best, however, to defer the ceremony of her benediction till the spring, for it was very cold weather, and the nuns were in the greatest poverty, having brought nothing with them but their clothes and their bedding.

March 21.

The day finally fixed upon was the 21st of March, 1624, the feast of our glorious Father St. Benedict. On this day the bishop sang Pontifical High Mass, and conferred the solemn Abbatial Benediction according to the Roman Pontifical on Dame Lucy, and towards the conclusion of the ceremony he and the new abbess, seated in their respective chairs, received the vows of Dames Eugenia, Magdalene, and Mary, who solemnly renewed them in the hands of their new Bishop and Abbess. This function was attended by many English persons, who were pleased and edified with all they saw. It was a special consolation to those who had given assistance to the new foundation, of whom several appear to have been present.

March 25.

The lay-novice who had accompanied the colony from Brussels was professed a few days later, on the feast of the Annunciation of Our Lady.

April.

In the following month the Rev. William Vincent arrived from England to be chaplain to the convent, bringing with him Mistress Mary Knatchbull, the Lady Abbess's niece, and Mistress Elizabeth Wigmore, the daughter of William Wigmore, Esq., of Luton in Herefordshire, both of whom wished to enter the novitiate. These were the first postulants of our community, and both of them proved themselves worthy of this honour. They entered on the 19th of April, Mary Knatchbull retaining her beautiful name, and Elizabeth Wigmore taking that of Catherine.

First
Postulants.

April 19.

Father Vincent was a prudent and excellent man, who proved to be a sincere and valuable friend to the community, with whom he remained till his death in 1660. His arrival was a great boon, for hitherto they had had their daily mass said by a priest from St. John's Church, and it was much more convenient to have a resident chaplain.

Statutes.

The new monastery had from the beginning taken the title of the Immaculate Conception. As regards their constitutions or statutes, they adhered to those which they had brought from Brussels, and which had been confirmed in the year 1612 by Archbishop Hovius (or Van Houé, as his name is sometimes written) by authority delegated to him by the Holy See. They had been compiled, as a MS. states, by "a consult of prelates, abbots, and divines well experienced in monastic discipline."

The principal features of these our statutes may be summed up as follows. The Abbess, according to our Holy Rule, is perpetual, and is elected according to the canons of the Council of Trent, and the Bull of Pope Gregory XIII. given in 1574. The Prioress, members of the council and other principal officials are to be chosen every third year by a majority of the chapter: the Roman Breviary recently reformed and published by Pope

St. Pius V. was to be recited, rather than one of the editions (at that time somewhat numerous) of that of the Order.* As regards fasting and abstinence, the statutes prescribed certain mitigations which appear to have been at that time not uncommon amongst Benedictine nuns.† Meat was allowed three times a week out of Advent and Septuagesima time; and the daily fast prescribed in the rule from September to Lent was reduced to two or three days in the week. This gave a law which would produce uniformity, inasmuch as it was, at that time, within the power of most persons.

The dress worn by our community from its commencement was that generally recognised as the true Benedictine habit,‡ from which at that time many convents of our Order (especially in France) had notably deviated. The head-dress was a kind of stiff veil, essentially Flemish, and which was a good deal in vogue in that country; a thin veil was added for the nuns of the choir. The plaited wimple is said to have been imitated from those of some French nuns who lodged in our convent on one occasion, but on this subject there is no very certain tradition, and none at all as to the date of its adoption; but it must have been early in the history of our house, since we hear that it was brought to Brussels from Ghent about 1661. This dress is precisely what we now wear, though we do not arrange it in quite so quaint a manner as was done in Flanders.

Habit and
Head-dress.

Lady Lucy desired that the Fathers of the Society of Jesus should act as extraordinary confessors and directors to the community. The society was at that time at the height of its fervour, and in great repute for learning and virtue, and many convents eagerly sought its spiritual aid. The English Jesuits had rendered much assistance in the foundation of the Brussels Monastery, and for a time acted as confessors there, and our four foundresses had profited much by their counsels. At Ghent, there was a house of English Jesuits § not far from our monastery, so a continuation of their direction was easily obtained. The ordinary confessor or chaplain (the Jesuit rule not permitting them to undertake chaplaincies) was always a secular priest, and our sisters appear to have been singularly fortunate in the choice of them, for it is said that they were all learned and singularly virtuous men.

Extraordinary
Confessors.

Our little community continued even in this first year of its existence to increase steadily. The fame of the virtues of its members soon reached England, and persuaded young gentlewomen to associate themselves with them. The foundresses were careful to receive only those with competent dowries, since these seemed likely to form the only means of subsistence for the present. Indeed our house never received what might be called a real foundation, and during the whole time of its existence in Flanders suffered considerably from poverty from time to time.

* It may be observed that at the time that our Statutes were first drawn up, the Monastic Breviary now in use for the whole Order could not have been published, as it only came out in the very year of the *confirmation* of the Statutes (1612) which had first had a year's trial. Up to that time each Benedictine congregation had had its own Breviary: (see Guéranger's "Institutions Liturgiques," Tome I., Ch. XVI.) while the Roman Breviary recently brought out was very highly thought of, as being based on the best and purest liturgical traditions. There were several other houses of our Order about this time which adopted it.

† See Hélyot's "Histoire des Ordres Religieux," Tome 5, Art. "Religieuses Bénédictines."

‡ The peculiarly neat plaiting of our cowls earned for our sisters the nickname of "The finikin nuns of Ghent."

§ Father Norton Knatchbull, Lady Lucy's brother was third rector of this house at Ghent, being appointed, it is thought, about the year 1630.

1624.

Postulants.

Among the postulants of the first year were three nieces of the Lady Abbess. One of these was Dame Mary, of whom we have already spoken. The two others, who came a little later, were Dame Margaret and Dame Paula Knatchbull, the first being the sister, and the second the cousin of Dame Mary. Mary Pease, Gertrude Margaret Lawson, Mary Southcote, and Hieronyma (or Jeronima) Waldegrave were also among the first to commence their religious life in that poor little hired house in the town, which continued for some time longer to be the abode of the community. The religious life was now being practised in all its strictness, and inclosure was properly observed, for grates and turns had been arranged for this end. The Divine Office and Conventual Mass, however, had not yet all their due solemnity, this being impossible in the temporary chapel still in use.

This, our first convent (as indeed the subsequent building also), was situated in that part of the city which was included in the Lordship of the Great Abbey of St. Peter's, the abbot of which exercised a kind of feudal sovereignty over his domain. This necessitated a few little formalities regarding the opening of a chapel and celebrating the Divine Office. Lady Lucy, in order to recognise the Lord Abbot's right of patronage, applied to him for the necessary permission, which was granted on the condition that each year on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, a wax candle of two pounds' weight should be presented at St. Peter's during the High Mass from our monastery, together with a "denier" of silver; this was a nominal offering as a recognition of the abbot's feudal superiority. Conditions were also drawn up regarding mutual prayers for the departed members of each monastery, and the document containing the articles of agreement was duly signed on both sides.*

May 12.

On the 12th of May that same year, 1624, Dame Elizabeth Bradbury made her profession. It was the nineteenth anniversary of the profession of Dame Eugenia Pulton, her kinswoman; this religious had become Mistress of Novices, and on her devolved the responsibility of training up the first plants of our holy house. She was fully equal to the task, being a woman of proved religious virtue, and having a signal gift of prayer. Dame Elizabeth's was the first profession for the choir in this our new monastery of Ghent.

Lay-sisters.

Sister Lucy Elizabeth Bacon had made her vows as a lay-sister within a few days after Lady Lucy's benediction. Before very long she was joined by a professed sister from Brussels, Sister Cecily Price, and by a novice from the same house, Sister Teresa Matlock, who was already clothed in the holy habit, and made her vows at Ghent, on the 28th of August. She was a very fervent soul, remarkable for many virtues, and for a singular devotion to the great doctor of the church, St. Augustine, on whose feast she was professed.

Sister Teresa
Matlock.

A striking story is told of this good Sister Teresa, which we must not pass over unnoticed. She was once much struck with the beauty of the flowers in the abbey garden, and conceived a great wish to be able to imitate them in silk. That night she thought she saw in a dream the great St. Augustine, to whom, as we have said, she had a great devotion. He shewed her some flowers with which he was surrounded, and

* The original deed of this agreement may be seen in the State Archives at Ghent. Unfortunately the writing and state of preservation are so bad that it has been impossible to transcribe it in full.

gave her minute instructions how to work them in silk. When she awoke, she clearly remembered all his directions, and found, on trying, that she succeeded perfectly in this kind of embroidery. She soon had many pupils amongst the dames, and this beautiful work, so true to nature (of which we still preserve a few specimens), was thenceforward much practised in the community, both for the use of the altar and for sale, which latter purpose was by no means to be despised in the straitened circumstances of the community.

Other lay-sisters gradually joined these first members. One of the first, who entered in the first year of the foundation, was Sister Catherine Thorold, a lady of good family, who had been educated at St. Omer by the companions of Mrs. Mary Ward. Out of humility she insisted on being received as a converse, or lay-sister, in spite of the opposition of her friends; but she brought the full portion of a choir nun. She was professed on the 11th of June, 1626.

Sister
Catherine
Thorold.

On the 2nd of July, the feast of Our Lady's Visitation, Dame Mary Knatchbull and Dame Catherine Wigmore made their solemn profession. These two were the first postulants of our house, since Dame Elizabeth Bradbury had been clothed at Brussels.

1626.

On the 12th of August in the same year, Dame Gertrude Lawson* and Dame Mary Pease were also admitted to their vows. The former was the daughter of Roger Lawson, Esq., of Heaton, in Northumberland, and sister of Henry Lawson, Esq., of Brough Hall. The community now numbered nine dames, and there were four novices and four lay-sisters.

August 12.

The following year our sisters were saddened by their first death, and it was that of so good and so promising a member that they had good cause to regret her. Dame Mary Knatchbull died of fever on the feast of Our Lady's Assumption, 1627, at the age of nineteen, having been professed but thirteen months. Her short religious career had been a model of virtue and fervour. It is said of her, that during the thirteen months which intervened between her profession and her death, she never lost sight of the presence of God; and her aptitude for prayer (as may be easily inferred) was quite remarkable. She was the first Mary professed in this house, dedicated to Our Lady's Immaculate Conception; she was professed on the feast of Her Visitation, and died on that of Her glorious Assumption.

1627.
First death.
August 1

The death of Dame Mary made our nuns more sensible than ever of the great need in which they stood of a suitable monastery, since they had no burial-ground, and had to beg some Augustinian nuns who lived near them to bury her in their cemetery, expressly stipulating that the remains should be restored to them as soon as they had one of their own. This was readily granted, and a deed was drawn up to this effect, signed by the Bishop himself.

Every trial bears its fruit, and it is remarkable how soon this first death was followed by a blessing. We have already mentioned that Lady Lucy Knatchbull had received into the monastery two nieces of her own, besides Dame Mary, whose death we have been relating. Now, Dame Paula had a younger sister also called Mary,† who had earnestly begged to be received with her sister, but the prudent Abbess, having now three nieces in the community, did not think it expedient to take a fourth, and advised this last one

* See Appendix II., No. 5.

† See Appendix II., No. 2.

1627.

to join the Poor Clares at Gravelines, which she accordingly did. It happened, however, before she had been there long, that a division arose in that community, "which certainly," says Sir Toby Matthews, "was fomented from abroad." "But some of them" he continues, "had then inclined to subject themselves to the visits of the Order, though some other of them desired still to remaine under the Ordinary, as they had alwayes done till then. The settling of this question cost some time, but afterward was decided, and they were parted into two convents;* and so the Religious were all disposed off accordinge to their severall affections, with contentment to them all."†

All this was too much for our poor novice, who left Gravelines as soon as possible, apparently before the discussion was brought to a close; and she renewed her petition to her aunt that she might be received at Ghent. In the meanwhile her cousin and namesake had died, so that only two nieces of the abbess remained, and accordingly she was admitted. Her term of postulancy was shortened, in consideration of the months she had passed in another novitiate, and she was professed on the 8th of December, 1628. In all this we see the finger of God's providence. Dame Mary Knatchbull proved no degenerate member of her saintly family. She became the fourth abbess of our community, which she governed with consummate wisdom and skill for the long term of forty-five years, and she died after a long life full of merit and works.

December 8.

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception that year, 1627, four professions were made; they were those of Dames Mary Southcote, Margaret and Paula Knatchbull and Jeronima Waldegrave.

The importance of having a monastery was becoming more and more realised, and the abbess began seriously to consider how this might be accomplished. Father Vincent and other friends took the matter to heart, and made many inquiries and researches, and at last came upon a piece of land which seemed to be just the place for the new building. Sir Toby Matthews thus describes it:

"They came at length to fall upon a probable and faire peece of grownd at the topp of a small gentle hill,‡ not farr from a certaine goodly rich abbey of Benedictine moncks under the title of St. Peter, though, yet the nunns are no way subject to them, howsoever they live under one and the same holy Patriarke St. Bennett, for they are subject to the Ordinary of the place. But the soile which they pretended to buy, and upon which they would desire to build belonged to a gentleman of that towne who was called Monsieur Damass. There were also divers other little peeces or rather patches of grownd with divers little ill-favoured old Howses upon it, which belonged to the poorer sort of people in that place, and might conveniently enough be gotten and taken in to the purchase. . . . (The place) seemed to be of good health, and had a prospect of great variety and recreation towards Fields and Woods, and withall upon no streets, no nor Howses or people neer at hand."

Father Vincent reported his observations to the Lady Abbess, and she obtained the Bishop's leave to go and inspect the place herself, which she did, and was so delighted

* The convent colonised from Gravelines on this occasion was probably that of the Poor Clares of Aire, the foundation of which was brought about chiefly by Father Christopher Davenport, O.S.F., in 1629. (See Petre's "English Colleges and Convents," p. 86.)

† "Life of Lady Lucy Knatchbull," Part 2 Chapter 2, p. 107.

‡ Commonly called Mount Blandin.

with it that she determined to obtain it if she possibly could. But the owner, perceiving her great wish to make the bargain, kept obstinately to the high price which he was demanding for it, and even to the end abated it but very little. Nothing however would deter Lady Lucy from her choice, and after much negotiating, she at last decided to make the purchase and trust to providence for the means. Postulants were arriving rather rapidly at the time, and with the assistance of their portions, the price was soon paid. The new property, as we have seen, was not only on the lordship, but in close vicinity to St. Peter's Abbey, and to this day the visitor at Ghent may see the church of the latter—now a barrack—and our monastery, the church of which is pulled down—the monastery itself being turned into a spinning-manufactory—close together on the banks of the Scheldt.

1627.

The next thing to be thought about was the erection of a suitable building, with a church that was fit and worthy for the performance of the Divine Office. This was accomplished in about a year, and the community moved into the new monastery about the autumn of 1628. It was but a small building, but Lady Lucy deemed that it would be sufficiently large for the purpose. The grounds annexed were pleasant and spacious, and the Lady Abbess procured land also from the Lord Abbot of St. Peter's.

1628.

Building of
the Convent.

During this autumn, more professions were received, those of Sister Anne Overlow, on the 28th of August, Dame Scholastica Roper (Dame Mary's sister) on the 14th of September, Sister Frances Wright (whose brother Peter was the well-known Jesuit martyr) on the 4th of October, and Dame Mary Knatchbull, whose previous history we have related, on the 8th of December.

But just as our sisters seemed so happily settled, God tried them with a very heavy cross. Sir Toby Matthews, in his quaint language, expresses it as follows:—"Behold how those poore Religious, who held themselves in that new Place of their owne to be as it were already no less then halfe way up to Heaven, were all knocked downe at a clapp as low as any place out of Hell. For the Abbess who had longe been sickly grew now to be often sick insomuch as that she was then growne to be little less then in a kind of deepe consumption. But besides all these lingeringe infirmityes and miseryes of hers, she was seazed upon Good Fryday of that yeare, which was 1629, by a kind of continuall feaver, which made a finall end of her for this world notwithstanding all kind of possible remedies in the corporall way, and all kind of spirituall devotions also which were used for the preservation of her life. For then it fell so out that within less than a yeare after they had removed from that lower Howse of hers to the higher, it pleased our B^d Lord to call her to the highest Howse of all which is Heaven. Where now we may well presume that she lives to enjoy him for ever whom she had so highly honoured and adored, and so dearly and impatiently loved, and so joyfully and exactly served in this Mortall life of hers."

Sickness of
Lady Lucy.

1629.

Lady Lucy died on the 5th of August, 1629. For the full particulars of her happy departure, we would refer our readers to her death-bill, which is given at the end of this volume.* Her loss was a great blow to our young and rising community. All had looked up to their abbess as to a standard of every virtue. During the five years and a half of her prelature she had been a model of piety, zeal, and religious fervour.

August 5.
Death of
Lady Lucy
Knatchbull.

* See Appendix I., No. 1.

1629.

Above all things she studied to promote peace and union in the monastery, one of her special resolutions being that she would never permit any one, "and much less myself," said she, "to speak of the defects of others." This she left as a last legacy to her children—Peace, Unity, and Charity.

It was Lady Lucy who had headed the colony from Brussels. As first abbess, she may be considered to have been the chief foundress of our house. She bought the land and built the little convent which was the first monastic building occupied by our community. She laboured zealously for the spiritual foundation also, being very strict in enforcing the rule of silence, and forbidding long and superfluous conversation with seculars at the grate. Among the pious practices instituted by her, we may mention that of the abbess communicating every Saturday in honour of Our Blessed Lady for the spiritual good of the monastery and the next who is to die, a custom observed among us to this day. She lived to receive nearly thirty members, and thus passed to God's presence with her hands full of good works. She was buried in the new church, in a white marble tomb on the Gospel side of the altar. An epitaph and six Latin verses with anagrams on her name were there to be seen.*

Burial of
Lady Lucy.

Lady Eugenia,
second abbess.

Lady Lucy Knatchbull was succeeded by Lady Eugenia Pulton, the oldest of our four foundresses, who had been Novice-Mistress ever since the arrival in Ghent. The election took place on St. Laurence's day, August the 10th, and on the 16th of September following, she received the solemn benediction, and was placed by the Bishop in the chair of authority.

Her zeal in
the Choir
Service.

It fell to the lot of this our second Abbess to pursue and perfect Lady Lucy's work. The community had been settled in the new house barely a year when the latter died, and it had not yet been possible, fully to arrange and organise everything. It was her successor who instituted the singing of the Conventual Mass, the Processions of St. Mark and Rogation Days, and other such improvements in the choir service. She also appointed processions in honour of our Holy Father on his feasts, which went to the cave erected in his honour, with banners of our Holy Father and Mother, while his Litanies were sung by the dames of the choir. By these means did this, our good Abbess, show her zeal in the service of God, and He, who never fails richly to reward those who work for Him, bestowed upon her the gift of supernatural prayer, so that we are told how she was sometimes quite alienated from her senses for a quarter of an hour at a time, and her countenance, always beautiful, was in time of prayer specially so.†

Increase of
members.

During the thirteen years of Lady Eugenia's prelature the community increased wonderfully in numbers, and it is said that ladies would come out of England eleven at a time to enter either the novitiate or the school (for our foundresses had continued to educate young gentlewomen as they had done at Brussels), and that all, or nearly all, joined the community in time.

1630.

June 11.

During the year 1630 six professions were received. Those of Dame Mary Monson and Dame Thecla Bedingfeld took place on St. Barnabas' Day; the former was of a good Lincolnshire family, and the latter belonged to the Bedingfelds of Suffolk, who are still known as one of the oldest of our Catholic houses.‡

* See Appendix III., No. 1.

† From her death-bill.

‡ See Appendix II., No. 6.

A few days after their profession, died Sister Cecily Price, at a good old age. She had been professed at Brussels in 1604, and joined our community soon after its establishment. 1630. June 23.

The other professions were those of three lay-sisters on the 6th of October, Sisters Winefride Hall, Dorothy Barefoot, and Agnes Pickering, and of Dame Mary Trevelyan on the 20th. October 6.

On the 9th of November the same year, Dame Elisabeth Bradbury, the first professed at Ghent, died of consumption, much to the regret of all. She was a good and fervent soul, and would often urge herself onward in virtue by reflecting that she was, as they told her, "the most ancient of all who followed her," in this our new monastery. For this reason she had been put into offices somewhat young, and had distinguished herself by great activity and neatness as Sacristan, which employment was much more to her taste than that of Thourier which she also held, though in this latter too she gave great satisfaction, for her politeness and religious behaviour made a very good impression on seculars. October 20.

The following year added four more members to the community: Dame Benedicta Lawson (Dame Gertrude's sister), Dame Alexia Grey, and Dame Aloysia Beaumont, who were professed on St. John Baptist's day, and Dame Lucy Perkins on the 21st of October. 1631. June 24.

Dame Aloysia Beaumont (of Grace-dieu in Leicestershire) was a good Latin scholar, which is also recorded of Dame Mary Southcote.*

The year 1632 saw the professions of three Dames: Elizabeth Markham (Feb. 3rd), Ignatia Fortescue (May 6th), and Mechtilda Plumpton (Sept. 8th); and two lay-sisters, Elizabeth Towers (March 19th) and Bennet Walton (June 21st). Dame Ignatia Fortescue and her sister Dame Barbara (who joined our community a little later) were descended from the holy martyr, Sir Adrian Fortescue, who was beheaded in July 1539, for they were the grand-daughters of his grandson, and Dame Aloysia Beaumont (whose mother was a Fortescue) shared the same honour. 1632.

In 1633, on the 30th of April, an interesting old lay-sister made her profession at the age of eighty. This was Sister Benedicta Corby, the mother of the Jesuit martyr, Ralph Corby, and of two daughters who were lay-sisters at Brussels, where indeed she had entered in the first instance, but she finally removed to Ghent. Dame Eugenia Bedingfeld was professed for the choir on the 26th of June the same year. 1633. April 30. June 26.

The three professions made the following year, of Dame Anne Neville (daughter of Lord Abergavenny), Dame Barbara Fortescue and Dame Flavia Cary, were balanced by as many deaths, for Sister Catherine Thorold died of apoplexy on the 6th of February, Sister Dorothy Barefoot succumbed on the 27th of September to a dropsy, from which she had suffered for two years, and on the 11th of August, Dame Mary Trevelyan, a fervent and admirable religious, died of a complication of diseases, consumption, small-pox, and a terrible malady, which was thought to be the plague. All this sickness in a young and growing community was becoming a matter of grave anxiety, to superiors, and the worst was that it appeared to be on the increase. 1634.

* This is an example of the superiority of English Catholic education in the 17th century. A hundred years later, far from being Latin Scholars, we find them defective in their knowledge of French and even sometimes of their own language.

1635.
March 31. On the 31st of March, Dame Winefride Smythe was professed, and on the 9th of the following month Dame Aloysia Beaumont died of consumption at the early age of twenty-three. She was much regretted for her good example, and missed for her beautiful voice in the choir.

September 11. On the 11th of September, that year, two sisters were professed together, Dames Justina and Cornelia Corham, the daughters of an English merchant who lived at Antwerp. Dame Justina seems to have made her vows only that she might die a Benedictine, for scarcely were the "bride-days"* over than she had to be sent to the infirmary for a sickness which developed into consumption, and there she spent the next three years, which were the last of her life. Her sister survived her many years.

By the end of the year 1635, the community must have numbered nearly thirty dames, and some ten or twelve lay-sisters.

July 22. But, on the 22nd of July, one of the earliest members had left this world—Dame Jeronyma Waldegrave, who had always been delicate and sickly, and was not much over thirty years old when she died of consumption.

December 9. On the 9th of December that year Sister Mary Meynell was professed as a lay-sister.

1636. In the spring of 1636 an incident occurred of so remarkable a nature that we do not hesitate in giving it a place here. We can also assure our readers of its authenticity, for a relation of it was sent to Rome, signed by the person to whom it occurred and by four witnesses, all of whom were members of our community at the date referred to. A copy of this document was recently found in the British Museum, and was published and commented on in an English newspaper under the date of May 23rd, 1857, though the editor was apparently ignorant what religious house it belonged to.†

Story of John Sherman. A postulant in our monastery of Ghent, called Sister Aloysia German, while residing with an aunt in London, had been instrumental in the conversion of a highly respectable tradesman, by name John Sherman. Just after this event she left England, and was directed by God to our monastery, though it had not previously been her intention to enter amongst us. She must have reached Ghent in August, 1635, and soon after she heard from the Rev. Mr. Trevers (who had received Sherman into the church) of the death of her convert. Towards the end of October, the postulant began to be disturbed every night by three knocks against the oratory in her cell, as she said her night prayers. She spoke to her novice-mistress about this in great alarm, but her mistress assured her that it was merely a nervous fancy, to which decision she tried to submit till the following 3rd day of March, when another sister was praying with her, and she also distinctly heard the three knocks. Sister Aloysia, however, retired to bed, and drew the curtains close, whereupon the said curtains were suddenly thrown open again, to her great terror. She called her mistress, who came and closed the curtains and sprinkled the bed with holy water. The same thing occurred twice more; the last time

* The "Bride-days" are the day of profession or clothing and the two which follow.

† The mystery about the appearance of this paper in the British Museum was first publicly solved by Dom Aidan Gasquet, O.S.B., in an article in the *Downside Review* for the 25th of March, 1890, entitled "The passage of Dame Aloysia Garman (this name is spelled incorrectly) about John Sherman." This article informs us that the document in question was found among the papers of Cardinal Antony Gualterio, who, in the 17th century, was the protector of the English nation in Rome, and first Cardinal Secretary of the Propaganda. The descendants of his family, being reduced to poverty, sold these papers for their own benefit.

it was witnessed by the novice-mistress and another nun whom she had brought with her. Next morning Sister Aloysia told the Lady Abbess and Father Vincent what had passed, who told her that if the same thing happened again she must speak. That night Dame Mary Knatchbull and Dame Winefride Smythe were appointed to watch with her, and a fellow novice, Sister Ursula Butler, soon joined them. They all heard the three knocks as usual, and one of the dames said to the spirit, "If God will permit you, enter." Then Sister Aloysia, trembling violently, seized an image of Our Lady, made the sign of the cross, and cried out, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, who art thou? What art thou? What is thy name? And why visitest thou me?" A voice answered, "I am the soul of John Sherman; be not afraid, for I will not hurt you, but I am sent by Our Blessed Lady because none can help me but you. Five masses I desire, and had you spoken sooner I had sooner been at rest." Sister Aloysia rejoined, "And will five serve your turn? And when they are said will you be at rest?" The voice replied, "Yes, I will." The postulant promised to procure the masses, and the spirit went on, "I had but two nights more to come unto you, in which time, if you had not spoken, I should have stayed in purgatory God knows how long. Our Blessed Lady hath procured that I should come, because, having often heard Her spoken ill of, I did in my heart defend Her." Sister Aloysia then asked the spirit where he was, and he answered, "Here, at the end of your oratory." She then desired him to depart, in the name of the Holy Trinity, and all was again quiet.

Next morning, the Lady Abbess sent to the Jesuit College to procure four masses, and asked Father Vincent to say the fifth. Sister Aloysia was present at the last, and distinctly saw John Sherman standing at the Epistle side of the altar, in a white garment. He was visible only to her eyes, for the Lady Abbess and others to whom she spoke could see nothing unusual. The spirit appeared to kneel at the Elevation, and later, when the signal was heard of the Blessed Sacrament passing through the street to a sick person, he reverently bowed down. Sister Aloysia spoke to him, and received the following remarkable answer:—"This house is so pleasing to God and His Blessed Mother that none in it shall die without a happy death. And for the Lady Abbess, because she communicates every Saturday in honour of Our Blessed Lady, Our Lady attends upon her at the time of Holy Communion."

The spirit then told Dame Aloysia that for her own part she would have difficulties in her novitiate, but would nevertheless persevere. In effect, the event verified the prediction. After this he disappeared from view.

We refer the reader to the Appendix for Dame Aloysia's own relation of this remarkable occurrence, of which the above is the substance.*

The year 1636 saw no professions. The convent must have been full even to overflowing, and it was evident that its crowded state was telling on the health of the religious, numbers of whom were falling into consumption. It appears probable, too, that when the community had moved into the new building in 1628, it was not yet thoroughly dry, and this must have undermined the constitutions of some of the earlier members, amongst whom we may name Dames Jeronyma Waldegrave,

* See Appendix I., No. 4.

1636. Margaret Knatchbull, Elisabeth Bradbury and Aloysia Beaumont, all of whom died young of consumption. Superiors began seriously to consider how to remedy this state of things. The only substantial remedy seemed to be building, but this was expensive, and it was some time before they could see their way to it.

Change in the Statutes.

It appears probable that it was this state of general weak health amongst our sisters which caused his lordship the bishop, to make a deviation from two points of the statutes. By one of these changes, matins and lauds were allowed to be said overnight instead of at half-past three a.m., and by the other, those religious who were dispensed from the regular abstinence on account of their health, might take their meal at a "dispensed table" in the refectory, instead of being required to dine in the infirmary. Better discipline and order were thus established, since it allowed of all, or nearly all, the community attending the places of regular observance in spite of weak health. It is not known exactly when these changes were made, but they are inserted as marginal notes in the edition of the statutes dated 1632, and they subsist to this day.

December 14.

On the 14th of December, the Infirmary, Dame Thecla Bedingfeld, died of a consumptive fever, and on the 1st of February following, her cousin Dame Eugenia followed her to the grave. Again, two months later, Dame Margaret Knatchbull, the cousin of

1637.
February 1.

April 4.

Dames Mary and Paula, fell a victim to a painful internal consumption on the 4th of April.

May 12.

July 2.

August 6.

All this sickness did not seem to deter other fervent persons from entering amongst us, and we find that five professions were made that very year. The first was that of a sister, Sr. Magdalene Howard, on the 12th of May. The others were dames: Dame Marina Beaumont pronouncing her vows on the feast of Our Lady's Visitation, and the three others on the Transfiguration; they were Dame Aloysia German, the heroine of the ghost story, Dame Ursula Butler, and Dame Mary Digby. The latter, though nearly twenty years younger, was Dame Magdalene's first cousin, being the daughter of her father's youngest brother, John Digby, Esq., of Seaton, in the county of Rutland.

1638.

The following year, the community continued to increase, for Sister Margaret Cheeth Dame Constantia Savage (of Lord Rivers' family), and Dame Dorothy Cary were admitted to profession. Dame Constantia was professed on the feast of the Assumption, but before the day was over, our sisters were saddened by the death (long expected indeed) of Dame Justina Corham, who had been in a lingering consumption for nearly three years. Her last moments were truly edifying.

1639.

September 11.

December 27.

Her aunt Lady Coningsby, a pious widow, made her profession amongst us the following year, on the 11th of September, as Dame Mary Ignatia.

The following Christmas, on St. John's day, Dame Margaret Markham and Dame Eugenia Thorold were professed. The former was the daughter of George Markham, Esq., of Ollerton in Sherwood Forest, whose family had suffered much persecution for the ancient faith. The latter belonged to the family of the Thorolds, of Hough, near Grantham in Lincolnshire.

1640.

February 14.

December 20.

Another saintly widow was admitted to profession the following year, on the 14th of February, Dame Bridget Guildridge, daughter of Hugh Dorvolie, Esq.

In December the same year (1640), Dame Alexia Grey passed to her reward. The history of this dear sister's conversion from a worldly life is very striking: we will here give a summary of it, taken from her death-bill.

Dame Alexia's father dying when she was very young, her aunt Lady Kidson took charge of her and educated her in a manner suitable to her position in life, but unfortunately allowed her to be carried away by the pleasures of the world and a love of gaiety. One night, however, God sent her a dream that was calculated to rouse her from the delusions which accompany worldliness, and which may be described as follows. She thought she stood before the tribunal of God in the company of a crowd of other persons, and she distinctly beheld our Lord Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother, surrounded by angels and saints. A great globe was turned round before her, and she was called by her name—"Margaret Grey." Then she saw a list of names on the globe, accompanied with a description of the sins of individuals, amongst which she read one which concerned a person who lived in the same house with herself. At last she saw plainly a sin of her own, which, either from carelessness or some other reason, had never been confessed, and she even thought she heard the sentence of her damnation pronounced, which terrified her so much that she awoke. She took the first opportunity of making a general confession, and thus sowed the first seeds of a conversion. She also related to the other person what she had heard in her dream concerning her, whereupon, that person turned deadly pale, for the sin had indeed happened, and apparently God had been its only witness. Yet for a time, our good Dame Alexia went on in semi-forgetfulness of God, until at last at a ball, in the very middle of a dance, she seemed seized with an inspiration towards the religious life, and almost immediately after, in the first fervour of her resolve, left England and came to Ghent. Her religious life was a model of piety and exactitude, and the notice written of her after her death, like many other of these early sketches, makes us feel how much we should thank and bless God for the privilege of belonging to a community which has numbered such favoured souls. Dame Alexia Grey was noted for her devotion to our holy Rule, and it was owing to her exertions that it was printed in English together with our statutes, the edition (dated 1632) being dedicated to the Lady Abbess, Eugenia Poulton. Such were the effects of the persecution in England that St. Benedict's Rule was no longer to be had in English at the time we speak of, except in a few old manuscripts—that rule by which thousands of monks and nuns had lived in our poor country before the great schism. Dame Alexia's edition of the statutes was the only one brought to England by our community in 1794, and consequently the only one used by us until the late revised edition was brought out.

1640.

Dame Alexia Grey.

Printing of the Rule and Statutes.

Dame Alexia Grey died of a lingering consumption, after two years passed in the infirmary.

The 13th of January following saw the profession of Dame Christina Forster, the daughter of Sir Richard Forster, Treasurer to Queen Henrietta Maria.

1641.

January 13.

On the 12th of February died Dame Mary Southcote, a member of an ancient English family. She had come to religion at the early age of fourteen, was professed at sixteen, and died at thirty, after an illness of about ten days, a complication of palsy, apoplexy, and falling sickness. She was a fervent and edifying religious, and one of our first plants, having joined the community the year after its foundation, and been professed in 1627.

February 12.

The following month saw the deaths of Dame Scholastica Roper, sister of Dame Mary, and their niece Catherine Roper, a convictrix (or boarder) who was receiving her education in the monastery. Dame Scholastica had suffered from almost continual infirmity from the

March 7.

1641.

time of her profession, and, after a good and fervent preparation for death, breathed her last on the 7th of March.

Catherine Roper was the daughter of Dame Mary's brother William. She was intending to become a Poor Clare, and no doubt Almighty God had already accepted her sacrifice of herself, though He decreed that it should be fulfilled in a different way, for He sent her a fever, of which she died on the 27th of March, aged fourteen.

July 8.

On the 8th of July, another of the religious fell a victim to what might be almost called the epidemic of consumption. This was Dame Mary Digby, a fervent and chosen soul, who, on presenting herself to the monastery only a few years before, had earnestly entreated admittance because she found that the great Mother of God, to whom she was so signally devoted, was here so notably honoured. She was one (out of many indeed) whose example was a real loss to the community, but on whose intercession in Heaven we might confidently rely.

Lady Eugenia was now fully decided that a more spacious monastery must be built. The community had greatly increased in number since Lady Lucy's death, and her small building was now most insufficient.

New
Monastery.

The erection of a large monastery was a matter of some responsibility in the narrow circumstances of the community, but it was imperative, so that the difficulties had to be met as they best could. The abbess was fortunate enough to find a friend in need, who volunteered to advance the sum of 35,000 florins (about £3,354) with which it was thought that the work might be begun. This friend was Mr. Louis van Hoobrouck, originally of the Irish family O'Brook, naturalised in Flanders. He appears to have behaved in a generous and upright manner, and his family were long looked upon as benefactors to our community, who kept up a yearly mass for its departed members until a recent date. The debt, however, was not paid for many years, and interest on it was given for a long time. This was a matter of great anxiety to Lady Eugenia, who was troubled at the thought of leaving her successors in debt. The monastery appears to have been many years in course of erection, which cannot excite surprise in any who know the large and fine building that it was. We have views of it, as it stood in the following century, and it is from these that the accompanying plates are taken. From all accounts it is even now but little changed in appearance, though the fine grounds have quite disappeared in the ever increasing buildings with which it is surrounded.

1642.

February 20.

In the month of February, 1642, another member of the Bedingfeld family, Sister Thecla, was professed on her death-bed, and died shortly after. She had always been consumptive, but her great courage and energy kept her up to the very last. Her death was singularly calm and happy. This dear sister was the daughter of Mr. Matthew Bedingfeld, who was residing in Brussels, and cousin to the first Dame Thecla and Dame Eugenia.

May 7.

On the 7th of May, the community admitted to profession two admirable widows, Dame Teresa Gardiner, a convert (née Bream), and Dame Monica Bartlett (née Kelloway). On the 24th of the same month, Sister Dorothy Skrimshire was also received as a lay-sister, although (judging by the title "Esquire" which we find applied to her father, Mr. Thomas Skrimshire), she seems to have been of a superior position in the world.



SOUTH-EAST VIEW OF THE ENGLISH ABBEY AT GHENT.



In the July of the same year, a touching incident occurred. There were in the school two sisters called Wakeman, the daughters of Edward Wakeman, Esq., of Beckford, in Gloucestershire. One of them intended entering our novitiate, but the other, Elizabeth, had had thoughts of becoming a Teresian in the monastery at Antwerp, where she had an aunt. But God turned her thoughts from thence to this our Holy Order, towards which she now conceived so great a love that she seemed to be counting the months till she should be old enough to enter amongst us, for she was only thirteen. But suddenly she caught a chill, and fell into a violent fever, which increased so rapidly that it was soon plain she could not recover. On hearing of her danger, she begged to be allowed to make the vows of holy religion on her death-bed. This was granted, and Father Vincent drew them up in writing, inserting a clause which stated that should she recover she would be free. But when she pronounced them aloud (the community being round her bed) she omitted this clause, and said instead—"for *ever*, and *ever* and *ever*!" All were much moved at the fervour of this dear little girl, who soon after, that is on the Votive Feast of our Holy Father, received all the last Sacraments, and she died the next day. She was buried in the Benedictine habit, and we are confident that our Holy Father would recognize her as one of his children in Heaven. Her sister, Dame Agnes Wakeman, was professed eight years later.

1642.

July.

Elizabeth Wakeman.

July 11.

On the 20th of October, Dame Frances Roper was professed; she was Dame Mary's niece, being the daughter of her brother John, third Lord Teynham.*

October 20.

Towards the end of the year 1642, the differences between King Charles of England and his parliament began to ripen into civil war, and the great rebellion ensued. This proved to be a very serious trouble to our community, as well as to other English persons. Their property had, from the beginning, been invested in England, where it was then deemed safer than in Flanders, and in the confusion which followed the outbreak of the rebellion, they ceased to receive the interest of their money. Added to this, their friends and relations were no longer in a position to assist them, for the old Catholic families (as is well known) all embraced the royalist party, and were so persecuted as to be well-nigh ruined in a short time. Our monastery in consequence lost a considerable sum of money, and this loss was heavily felt. At the same time further troubles were in store owing to the declining health of Lady Eugenia, our second abbess. For some time she had been suffering from a complication of maladies, she was moreover advancing in age, and the cares and responsibilities of her office told heavily upon her. She began to lose her memory, and at last her mind became so much enfeebled that she was incapable of transacting business. Happily she was fully conscious of her state, and before the end of the year 1642, she decided to resign her office, which she accordingly did in full chapter on the 19th of November, and on the 4th of the following month, Dame Mary Roper was elected her successor. She was solemnly blessed and placed by the bishop in the chair of authority on the 11th of the same month. Four days later she received the profession of Dame Philippa Symons.

The Rebellion in England.

Lady Eugenia resigns her office.

Election of Dame Mary Roper.

December 11.

December 15.

During the three years that Lady Eugenia survived, it was most edifying to witness the dutiful love and respect which she shewed to Lady Mary, ever preventing her with

* See Appendix II., No. 4.

honour, and asking her blessing. Lady Mary, on her part, always manifested a true respect and veneration for her excellent predecessor.

During the eight short years of Lady Mary Roper's prelature, she maintained the beautiful religious spirit which had been introduced by our first two abbesses, adding here and there, as circumstances might require, divers little pious practices or improvements. The feast of all the saints of our holy Order, recently instituted by Pope Paul V., was added to our calendar in her time, and she was in many ways distinguished for her devotion to our Holy Father and his sainted followers. It was she, too, who chose the great St. Joseph as *economus* or patron of the temporalities of our monastery, which tradition has been kept up amongst us to this day. It is not known, however, when the practice was first instituted of the Saturday's Communion in his honour, made by each member of the community in turn (as at present). It is quite clear that this was originated at Ghent, but the custom is not so ancient as that of the abbess's weekly Communion in honour of Our Lady, appointed by Lady Lucy Knatchbull; and we do not even think it is quite so ancient as Lady Mary Roper's time, though it was, of course, suggested by the fact we have just mentioned of her choosing this great saint as patron of our temporal affairs. However this may have been, we have certainly received much help from him, for after many times of poverty and difficulty, by God's grace and the saint's intercession, all has ended well.

Lady Mary Roper also recommended the practice to which we are still exhorted, of saying the *De profundis* when going about the monastery, both as a suffrage for the holy souls, and as a help to maintaining silence and recollection; and she had this sentence put up in large letters over every public door: "In silence and recollection shall be your profit and hope;" she also gave a form of writing to be put on the oratory in every nun's cell, containing a resolution of charitable conduct to be practised during the day. It is conceived in the following terms: "To the greater glory of God, and in union with His divine charity, and in satisfaction for my former defects herein, I will this day be very wary to avert my eyes from seeing, my thoughts from judging, and my lips from speaking against charity, towards any spouse of my Saviour in this holy house, but I will excuse all, and only be my own accuser." Thus, did our good abbess labour to keep up in the community the beautiful spirit of charity, established there by Lady Lucy.

When she gave exhortations in chapter, her words and the unction which accompanied them were so touching that she used to move others, as well as herself, to tears. As regards her intercourse with seculars, we will quote an interesting extract from Sir Toby Matthews, who was personally acquainted with her:

"Duringe her Government here at this new home of hers, the times were growne to be not only very captious and curst but cruel, in her first old home which was England. Now, this brought many Catholique gentlemen over into these parts, to seeke for that quiet in generall and particularly for conveniency and ease in exercising those acts which concerned Catholique Religion. And amongst the rest there came many of her owne kindred from England, towards whom (they suffering so much for Religion as they did, and beinge deprived of so many comforts at home) the nobleness of her heart and sweetness of her nature made her indulgent enough. And when once, by that great access, the Grates grew to be so much frequented and the Religious much distracted by that

meanes, she quickly came to take hold of the best advice which was likely to be of the most probable meanes which she could handsomely find for limittinge that abundance of visits, and exempting divers dayes in the weeke from giving or receaving that trouble."

1642.

The same writer goes on to tell us that Lady Mary Roper always captivated strangers with her "excellent presence and good grace," although she was obliged to make use of an interpreter with all that did not speak English, as she herself spoke no other language. It was in her time, too, that the Duchess of Buckingham was entertained in our monastery for more than a year by the Bishop's special order, and we hear that this good lady was quite charmed with her sojourn in this peaceful spot, after all her sorrows.

The chronicle of professions and deaths during Lady Mary Roper's prelature runs as follows:

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1643, one of Our Lady's children, bearing her own name, passed to her reward. Dame Mary Pease was one of the most ancient in the rising community, having been professed in 1626. Towards the end of the year, 1643, she was attacked by a dropsy, which in a short time brought her to the grave.

1643.

In the year 1644, on the 30th of May, Dame Scholastica Heneage was professed for the choir.

1644.
May 30.

That day twelve-month, Sister Dorothy Skrimshire died after a brief illness of fever. She had been professed only three years.

1645.
May 30.

Although our monastery was established expressly for British subjects, a Flemish converse sister was sometimes of service, and one, Sister Martina de Decken, was professed on the 6th of July of this year. The lay-sisters at Ghent did not observe inclosure, and were employed in marketing and other business, for which a knowledge of the language and habits of the country was useful. Sister Martina was long employed in this way, and her capacity for business and accuracy in accounts enabled her to render considerable service to the community. It was also a matter of edification to see how punctual and regular she was in her attendance at community duties, which with her active post was no easy matter.

July 6.

The next event of note was the death of Lady Eugenia. It has already been stated that she suffered from several painful maladies, and during the last three years of her life she was quite an invalid, though she continued almost to the end to attend the holy sacraments, and to recite the Divine office with one of the community appointed to this duty. On the 9th of November, 1645, the anniversary of Dame Elizabeth Bradbury her relation, she received the last rites of the church and calmly expired, surrounded by the community. We are told how all, including the reigning Abbess herself, begged her farewell blessing, as that of a venerated mother.* Amongst the many edifying things recorded of this, the second Abbess of our monastery, we read that her humility always led her to ask pardon of anyone whom she thought she had reprehended too warmly that day; that her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was very conspicuous, and she visited It frequently every day, and that she also had a special devotion to our Blessed Lady and to our holy Mother St. Scholastica, whose feast she caused to be kept every year with great solemnity, giving chapter always on the eve. It is even said that she was

November 9.
Death of Lady
Eugenia
Poulton.

* See Appendix III., No. 2.

1645. once favoured with a vision from that beautiful saint, whom she truly resembled by her spirit of prayer.
1646. The next profession was that of Dame Augustina Tichbourne, which took place on the 5th of February, 1646.
- February 5. On the 23rd of the same month, a canonical visitation was held by the bishop, M. Antoine de Trieste. The account rendered to him by the Lady Abbess of the financial affairs of the monastery has been preserved, and is of some interest. It shews us the difficulties caused by the disturbed state of England at that time, and how nothing whatever could be hoped for from thence. Like all the documents of that period, this statement is written in excellent Latin.*
- February 23. On the 9th of April, Dame Francisca Carington was professed. She was the daughter of Charles, first Baron Carington, and Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Caryll, of Harting, in Sussex.†
- April 9. The following year witnessed the professions of Dames Aldegonde Finch and Agatha Webbe on the 5th of February, and the death of Dame Bridget Guildridge, on the 25th of the same month. The demise of the latter was rather sudden, though she had been somewhat failing for some time past. She was a truly holy woman, and had doubtless made up as great a crown of merits in her seven years of religious life as many have done in a much longer term. She was seventy-three years of age at her death.
1647. By this time the frequent cases of consumption were almost disappearing. The year 1648 brought professions and no deaths, and the numbers in the community seemed to be steadily rising. On the 28th January, Dame Alexia Maurice received the black veil, and on the 12th of September, Dame Helena Wayte and Dame Mary Joseph Lawson, the niece of Dame Gertrude and Dame Benedicta.
- February 5. On the 13th of April, 1649, Dame Mary Bedingfeld, the youngest sister of the last Dame Thecla, was professed, and on the 11th of July, Dame Placida Lopez de Ulloa. Hers is one of the very few foreign names to be found on our list. Dame Mary Minshall made her profession about the same time.
1648. On the 13th of April, 1649, Dame Mary Bedingfeld, the youngest sister of the last Dame Thecla, was professed, and on the 11th of July, Dame Placida Lopez de Ulloa. Hers is one of the very few foreign names to be found on our list. Dame Mary Minshall made her profession about the same time.
1649. The year 1650, brought its blessings and its trials. On the 6th of February, Dame Agnes Wakeman (already mentioned) and Dame Mary Caryll were professed. The latter was the daughter of John Caryll, Esq., of Harting, and of Catherine, daughter to William, second Lord Petre. She was destined to become a great light in our congregation.
1650. On the 24th of March, King Charles II., who was passing through Ghent, being in exile after his father's death, called at our monastery. We will relate this interesting event in the words of an old MS., which must have been written soon after its occurrence.‡
- Visit of King Charles II. "Upon the Annuntiation eve precedent to her last sickness, our young King Charles the Second a little after the beheading of his father, in his first passing through Ghent was received into our monastry by this our Reverend Dear Lady Abbess and religiously intertained, her Ladyship having a serious and private conference with his majesty, she

* See Appendix I., No. 5.

† See Appendix II., No. 7

‡ Mortuary Record of Lady Mary Roper.

1650.

noting down what pass'd between them; this was but a month before her happy dissolution. And after her buriall the paper was found amongst the private writings in her oratory, where she did not spear to speak plainly and most piously, in order to his eternall and temporall good; who was so well pleased at her humble, prudent, and cordiall sincerity that then and ever since his majesty shewed himself upon all possible occasions peculiarly and graciously affected to this our community. After his departure he put us all in mind of our Dear Saviour, how he was deserted by his own people, having this thought when we saw the king in his purple coat mourning for his father, which moved my Lady and us all (at her Ladyship's precise ordain) to pray hartily for his conversion and the good success of his bleeding affairs."*

In less than a month after the king's visit, our sisters were plunged into the deepest April grief. The saintly abbess caught a severe chill, and although at first she rallied and returned to the choir duty, she never quite recovered. On Palm Sunday, she was again taken ill during Vespers, and obliged to go out, just as the choir was singing "*Percutiam pastorem et dispergentur oves gregis*" (Antiphon of the Magnificat). Her malady steadily increased, and turned into a violent fever, and by Easter all had learned that her recovery was, humanly speaking, impossible. The cloud cast over the community by this announcement caused the joyful season of Easter to be changed into one of mourning. The gentle character of Lady Mary Roper, together with her eminent religious virtue and sweet and attractive piety had so endeared her to her children, that they seemed scarcely able to bear the thought of parting with her, but she was ripe for heaven, and the Master whom she had served so well would not delay her crown. When our king, who was in Holland at the time, heard of her illness, he sent his own physician to attend her, but it was all in vain. During the last three days of her life she suffered intensely, but her children helped her by their prayers, and her good Jesuit director visited her frequently.

Illness of Lady Mary Roper.

On Wednesday in Easter week, April the 20th, the community being around her bed, April 20. she gave, at the instance of her director, three distinct blessings, one in the name of the Most Blessed Trinity, the second invoking the Mother of God, and the third calling upon our Holy Father St. Benedict, and soon after shut her eyes with her own hand and calmly expired, it being mid-day on the eve of the glorious St. Anselm, to whom she had a special devotion.

Death of Lady Mary Roper.

The Prioress, Dame Mary Knatchbull, addressed the following letter to the Lord Bishop of Ghent, to acquaint him with the sad news.†

"Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord,

"Yesterday towards noon, amidst our prayers and tears, it pleased God to call from this life to a better, our most dear abbess and mother Mary Roper. Shortly before her death, amongst other things she frequently exclaimed: 'Oh if I could but see my most reverend and beloved Father, and receive from his hand a blessing for myself and my children!'

Letter of the Prioress to the Bishop.

* We regret to say that the paper of notes here mentioned was amongst those which were lost in the hurried departure of the community from Ghent, and which have probably been long since destroyed.

† The original is in Latin and may be found in the Episcopal Archives in Ghent, See Appendix I., No. 6.

1650.

"But since she has departed full of the merits of her good works and has left us orphans, what remains for us but to fly to your most Reverend Lordship, who has never failed us in this monastery, but has always shewn us not only the kind care due from an excellent Prelate and Superior, but even the love of a Father!

"It is the custom in this monastery (and indeed our statutes make it of obligation) that as soon as possible after the funeral of a deceased abbess, the nuns should recollect themselves by three days spent in silence, to confer with God about the choosing of a new abbess; which ended, on the fourth day the election takes place, the most Reverend Bishop presiding in person. Will your Lordship, then, in your kindness, arrange this matter (of such great moment to this community), and let us know your plans, that we may meet your convenience, and employ the interim in suitable prayers and works of penance for obtaining the special grace of the Holy Spirit, that all may come to pass as may best promote God's honour and be to your Lordship's satisfaction and the good of the monastery.

"That all may be for the best we earnestly pray to God; and especially that He vouchsafe to preserve your Lordship long to your church and to us.

"Given in our monastery of Ghent, April the 21st, 1650.

"Of your most Illustrious and Reverend Lordship,

"The humble servant and daughter in Christ

"MARY KNATCHBULL,

"Prioress unworthy."

Funeral of
the Lady
Abbess.

The funeral of Lady Mary Roper was conducted with great solemnity, the bishop sending his own choir to chant the Requiem. She was interred in a tomb of black marble, by the side of Lady Eugenia Poulton whose monument was of similar material. Her nephew Lord Teynham had it erected at his own expense, with an epitaph and the family arms engraved on it.*

Her death was deeply lamented by many of even the townspeople, for she had been universally loved. "But," as her mortuary record beautifully expresses it, "we are confident that whilst we sowed in tears she reaped in joy the fruit of a plentiful harvest of good works, which is laid up in the celestial granary to the eternal praise of Christ Jesus our Lord, our Health, Life and Resurrection."

With the death of Lady Mary Roper we close the first Book of our Annals. The monastery had now existed over five-and-twenty years, and was henceforward to be governed by those who had been brought up and professed within its walls. The community, which had begun with six, now counted fifty-four members, and might be said to be flourishing both in numbers and in virtue—"merito et numero"—though certainly not in wealth. They were universally loved and respected, and as for their good bishop,† it seems that he treated them with quite a special favour; and it is related that when, in their days of poverty, they were in greater need than usual, he would send them presents of corn, fuel, and other provisions. Sir Toby Matthews, S.J., has the following paragraph

M. Antoine
de Trieste.

* See Appendix III., No. 3.

† M. Antoine de Trieste is said to have been born of a noble and ancient house. He was for some time Bishop of Bruges, but was translated to Ghent in 1622, and governed that diocese till his death in 1657.

in his life of Lady Lucy Knatchbull: (p. 302) "The Lord Bishop of Gant who is their visitour growes dayly in great abundance of goodness to them, and beholds them wth the eye of a father. Which, though (like a most worthy and Apostolicall Prelate) he also doe to his whole Diocess and charge, and particularly to all the Monasteryes in the Capitall Towne thereof, wth is Gant, yet he doth it with a more particular indulgence and bounty towards this Monastery of ours; which consistinge all of persons whose parents are alwayes sufferinge much in England for the Catholique Faith, it seemes that his goodness is wrought upon in order to us after an extraordinary manner."

As regards the religious virtues of our earlier members, a few examples collected from the notices in the Mortuary Register will give an edifying picture of it.

We read, then, of Dame Thecla Bedingfeld that she used sometimes to say: "How comes my good God to give me so much confidence in His favour, I having deserved so little at His hands? The attending to myself and meddling with nobody else doth give me this security."

Dame Margaret Knatchbull was often chaptered and humbled for things which she had never done, but was never heard to justify or excuse herself. Instances of religious virtue.

It is related of Dame Alexia Grey that she was so strict in her observance of silence that she would break off in the middle of a word if the bell rang.

Dame Mary Trevelyan was notably exact in obedience, and it is related that she would often go a long way round (holding an office which necessitated much passing to and fro) rather than break the rule which forbade going through the "Old Dorture" in the silence times; and she was never seen in the kitchen (this being also a forbidden place) except by the express order of superiors.

Dame Catherine Wigmore was never known to complain of any annoyance from others, being "a true friend of peace, supporting one another, with great signs of virtue." These are but a few instances from amongst very many.

May we ever venerate and cherish these examples of religious virtue, and pray that our community may not degenerate from the high standard of its ancients.



BOOK THE SECOND.

COLONIES OF BOULOGNE (PONTOISE), DUNKERQUE AND YPRES.

A.D. 1650 TO 1696.

On the 27th of April, 1650, being the Wednesday after Low Sunday, the chapter assembled to elect a successor to Lady Mary Roper, of happy memory. This appears to have been the most numerous chapter ever held in our monastery, the numbers being then at their highest. The following were the dames who composed it* :—

Dame Mary Knatchbull, Prioress	-	-	aged 40, prof. 22 years.
Dame Magdalene Digby, Dean and Consultress	„	64,	„ 40 „
Dame Gertrude Lawson, Dean and Consultress	„	45,	„ 25 „
Dame Ignatia Fortescue, Dean and Consultress	„	35,	„ 18 „
Dame Anne Neville, Dean and Consultress	-	„ 42,	„ 16 „
Dame Catherine Wigmore, Mistress of Novices	„	54,	„ 25 „
Dame Paula Knatchbull, Cellarer	-	-	„ 42, „ 23 „
Dame Mary Monson	-	-	„ 48, „ 20 „
Dame Lucy Perkins	-	-	„ 43, „ 19 „
Dame Benedicta Lawson	-	-	„ 41, „ 19 „
Dame Elisabeth Markham, Infirmarian	-	„ 38,	„ 19 „
Dame Mechtilda Plumpton	-	-	„ 36, „ 18 „
Dame Barbara Fortescue	-	-	„ 33, „ 16 „
Dame Flavia Cary, Chantress	-	-	„ 33, „ 16 „
Dame Marina Beaumont	-	-	„ 33, „ 13 „
Dame Winefride Smythe, Portress	-	-	„ 46, „ 15 „
Dame Cornelia Corham	-	-	„ 34, „ 15 „
Dame Ursula Butler	-	-	„ 28, „ 13 „
Dame Aloysia German	-	-	„ 48, „ 13 „
Dame Constantia Savage, Sacristan	-	-	„ 28, „ 12 „
Dame Dorothy Cary	-	-	„ 27, „ 12 „
Dame M. Ignatia Coningsby	-	-	„ 68, „ 12 „
Dame Margaret Markham, Guardrobe-	-	„ 28,	„ 11 „
Dame Eugenia Thorold, Thourier	-	-	„ 27, „ 11 „
Dame Christina Forster	-	-	„ 30, „ 10 „
Dame Frances Roper	-	-	„ 27, „ 9 „
Dame Teresa Gardiner	-	-	„ 60, „ 8 „
Dame Monica Bartlett, Procuratrix	-	-	„ 48, „ 8 „

* See Appendix L., No. 7.

Dame Philippa Symons	-	-	-	-	aged 26,	prof. 8 years.	
Dame Scholastica Heneage-	-	-	-	-	„ 23,	6	„
Dame Francisca Carington	-	-	-	-	„ 23,	5	„
Dame Augustina Tichborne	-	-	-	-	„ 38,	5	„
Dame Aldegonde Finch	-	-	-	-	„ 35,	4	„
Dame Alexia Maurice	-	-	-	-	„ 21,	3	„
Dame Mary Joseph Lawson	-	-	-	-	„ 29,	2	„
Dame Helena Wayte	-	-	-	-	„ 35,	2	„
Dame Mary Bedingfeld	-	-	-	-	„ 22,	2	„
Dame Mary Minshall	-	-	-	-	„ 24,	1	„
Dame Placida de Ulloa	-	-	-	-	„ 28,	1	„
Dame Mary Caryll	-	-	-	-	„ 20,	1	„
Dame Agnes Wakeman	-	-	-	-	„ 22,	1	„

1650.

The choice of the community fell on Dame Mary Knatchbull, the prioress, and she was solemnly blessed and placed in the chair of authority. Sir Toby Mathews describes this, our fourth abbess, as being “no dishonour at all to the memory of her holy aunt who was the first abbess, and much and very much less to either of those other two (though yet they were most worthy abbesses) who have interveaned.” He also tells us that she had been much employed in transacting the important affairs of the monastery by both those abbesses, and was very capable in all kinds of business, as indeed her acts as abbess sufficiently prove.

Lady Mary Knatchbull, fourth abbess.

When Lady Mary Knatchbull became abbess, she entered upon the serious responsibility of governing a large community almost destitute of temporal means. The “family” numbered in all eighty members; the interest on the investments in England was no longer paid, a new monastery was in course of erection (for which the community was already in debt), and the principal resources were the pensions of the novices and pupils, and the small gains which the religious made by their needlework. We still preserve an old copy of an appeal* made to the charity of the citizens of Ghent, which indeed bears no date, but which we refer to here, inasmuch as it is an illustration of the state of poverty which reigned in our monastery during the whole of the Great Rebellion in England, and again, later, after the revolution in the time of James the Second.

Poverty of the community.

Not long after the benediction of the new abbess, on the 12th of May, the death of Dame Teresa Gardiner occurred. The history of this holy woman is rather striking. When very young, and a protestant, she was married by her parents to Sir Thomas Gardiner, a bad and dissolute man much older than herself. Finding happiness in his society quite impossible, she escaped from him before long and went to Paris, where she became acquainted with some Bernardine nuns and with a virtuous English priest, by whose help and influence, and after many severe struggles, she was at last brought into the Church. It is said that she was assisted also by a remarkable vision of Our Blessed Lady. After the death of her husband, in the company of another widow lady (afterwards Dame Monica Bartlett), she came to Ghent and professed the religious life, and

May 12.

* See Appendix I., No. 8.

1650. her fervour during the whole term to which it extended was a source of edification to all.

November 27. In the month of November, Sister Teresa Matlock, the first introducer of the silk embroidery, departed this life. Her lungs had been attacked, and after a protracted and suffering illness, during which she gave the greatest consolation to all by her edifying piety and patience, she died a beautiful death.

1651. The following April, another lay-sister, Sister Joseph Richardson, was professed.

April 18. Our young King, Charles II., appears never to have forgotten the visit he paid to our monastery in March, 1650, or the deep impression made on him by the conversation of Lady Mary Roper. He kept up this good feeling, and transferred to Lady Mary Knatchbull the respect with which her predecessor had inspired him. Before she had long been abbess, he sent a donation to the monastery of 1,000 pistoles,* and settled on it an annuity of £500, a great benefit to our sisters in their poverty. This poverty, however, was so serious that it was only slightly alleviated by these occasional presents, and a more stable remedy was evidently needed.

After long consideration, the Lady Abbess decided that it would be expedient to undertake a new foundation. It was becoming quite impossible to provide for so large a household, and she hoped that if the numbers were reduced, difficulties would diminish, while the new colony would, ere long, be able to provide for itself. After due reflection, she fixed upon the town of Boulogne for her new monastery; it was at that time a small and unimportant seaport, but had been, for about a century, raised to the dignity of a bishopric. Accordingly she obtained permission from the Queen Regent, Anne of Austria, to make a foundation there. But the Queen offered her no money, and the abbess had, as she says herself, "not a florin" to work with. However, the Bishop of Ghent encouraged her, and she collected subscriptions from some merchants of Antwerp till she thought she had enough for a beginning. Amidst all her preparations, however, one thing seems to have escaped her, namely, an application to the Bishop of Boulogne, a most unfortunate oversight, as the sequel proved.

Project of a
foundation at
Boulogne.

1652. On the 4th of January, 1652, the chapter met to arrange for the departure of the new colony. Five dames and one lay-sister were chosen for the undertaking, namely, Dames Catherine Wigmore, Paula Knatchbull, Margaret Markham, Eugenia Thorold, and Christina Forster, with Sister Agnes Pickering.

January 4.

Dame Catherine Wigmore was prioress of Ghent at the time, and she and Dame Paula were considerably more ancient in religion than the others. It is said that all these our sisters accepted their mission in a spirit of sacrifice, which in the sequel they had full opportunity of putting into practice. Dame Catherine was chosen by the Lady Abbess and the Lord Bishop to be leader of the party, but it was of course understood that the abbess of the new monastery would not be elected until the community was settled.†

January 9. They started in mid-winter on the 9th of January, the weather being exceedingly severe, and a sharp frost prevailing. They appear to have met with disasters and

Departure for
Boulogne.

* A Spanish pistole (which is perhaps here referred to) is worth 16s. of English money. This donation would, therefore, be equal to £800.

† The account which follows of the foundation at Boulogne is taken from Lady Mary Knatchbull's own "Relation" of it, the original of which is at St. Scholastica's Abbey, Teignmouth.

contradictions at every turn, and to render their long journey still more trying, a thaw set in, which made the roads wet and muddy, and most difficult for travelling.

1652.

On reaching Bruges, they were very kindly received by the English Canonesses of S. Augustine, and lodged for two nights. At Nieuport, the English Franciscan nuns* also lodged them civilly. At Dunkerque again they met with a good reception, for the governor accommodated them "most courteously;" but at each place they arrived nearly frozen with cold, wet and exhausted.

At Gravelines, however, they found the gates of the city shut, and had to wait Journey. some time outside while messages and answers went backwards and forwards. At last they were admitted, and very kindly welcomed by the English Poor Clares.†

But after this difficulties increased, for no waggons were to be had, and they had to walk a long distance through mud and snow. They reached Calais wet and chilly, and repaired to a convent of French nuns of their Order in that town. These good sisters placed at their disposal a large room containing nine beds.

But in the meanwhile the report of their journey reached Boulogne, and the bishop of that diocese who had been prejudiced by a rumour that they were the "scum" of Ghent convent, and were coming to be a burthen to the town, resolved not to admit them. He sent a messenger to Calais to stop them, but the latter missed them, and they travelled on to Boulogne, where they were met by the bishop's refusal to have them. He would not even see them, and required that they should have a permanent income secured, and the security given to him, before he would tolerate their foundation. Several priests interceded for them, but to no purpose.

Opposition to
the foundation.

Matters remained thus for some time, till Lady Mary Knatchbull obtained written promises of funds from three wealthy merchants, and remembering that the Bishop of Boulogne belonged to the Congregation of the Mission, she addressed herself to its founder, the great St. Vincent of Paul, who was still living. A letter from him together with one from the Bishop of Ghent, naturally had some influence; and visits from several gentlemen, some of them relations of the Lady Abbess, who went on purpose to plead for the new colony, at last decided the bishop to refer the matter to the arbitration of a council, of which St. Vincent of Paul ("Monsieur Vincent," as they called him) was president. The decision given was favourable to the nuns, and the bishop finally consented to their settling in Boulogne, at all events for a time. The next thing was to find a suitable house, and here again difficulties were encountered. At last they found a good friend in Sir Richard Forster, Secretary and Treasurer to the Queen Mother (Henrietta Maria), and father of Dame Christina. This good man taxed himself to the utmost to provide the nuns with means, and at last they got really settled, in the month of April.‡

St. Vincent
of Paul.

After a time, Dame Christina fell ill, and as it was thought that she would not recover, the bishop came to visit and assist her. On this occasion his lordship was

* Now at Taunton in Somersetshire.

† The representatives of this community are now at Darlington.

‡ We cannot be certain about the real date of the settling at Boulogne, as the MSS. disagree. Lady Knatchbull's "Relation" says it was in April 1653, which would be fifteen months after the departure from Ghent; but the mortuary record of Lady Catherine Wigmore (preserved in our house) states that she was blessed as abbess on October the 18th, 1652, and adds that this was "ten months" after leaving Ghent. We have adopted the latter calculation, thinking that in the former, the 3 might be a slip of the pen.

1652.

quite won by what he saw of the community, and was finally reconciled to them. However he considered that the statutes ought to be approved in Rome, and he did not like matins being said overnight as had long been the practice at Ghent. He also made many stipulations regarding the security of their property and insisted on their binding themselves to remain permanently at Boulogne.* In the meanwhile Dame Christina's illness had taken a favourable turn, and ultimately she recovered her strength entirely.

In the month of August the Bishop asked that two more dames should be sent to Boulogne from Ghent, and Lady Abbess Knatchbull despatched Dame Lucy Perkins and Dame Francisca Carington, sending with them a pastoral staff, a ring, and other things necessary for the installation of an abbess. They arrived on the eve of the Assumption, and immediately the three days of recollection were begun, preparatory to the election, which took place on the 18th of August, in the presence of the Bishop of Boulogne. Dame Catherine Wigmore was elected abbess unanimously, her own being the only dissentient voice. The little community on this occasion received many presents and offerings from the Lady Carington, Dame Francisca's mother, which were very acceptable. The abbatial benediction took place two months later, on St. Luke's day. Thus, after much opposition and many difficulties this monastery was at last fairly established.

Election of
Lady
Catherine
Wigmore,
Abbess of
Boulogne.

Meanwhile in our monastery at Ghent an interesting event occurred. It was just at this time that Cromwell was carrying on his bitter persecution of Catholics in Ireland, and some were very glad to escape from the troubles of their poor country. Amongst these was the Lady Clanricarde, wife of the Marquess of Clanricarde, who brought her two daughters, Lady Honora and Lady Margaret to Ghent, intending to make some stay there. They called at our convent, and the elder, Lady Honora, a child of about fourteen, was so delighted with the place that she begged to be allowed to enter the school. To this her mother consented; but before she had been long in the monastery, her attractions ripened into an ardent wish to enter the novitiate. Her mother, however, would not hear of this, so the child herself and those interested in her determined to bide their time, in the hope that the marquess himself would be coming to Ghent ere long, and would be more easily persuaded to grant her petition. But before anything more had been done in the matter, Lady Honora fell ill of a spotted fever which was prevalent in the town at the time. It seemed as if God were accepting her sacrifice in the very height of her fervent desires, for the doctors gave no hopes of her recovery from the beginning of her illness. After a while she begged not only for the last sacraments but also for permission to make the holy vows of religion on her death bed, and her request was granted. Her mortuary record tells us that she was "almost revived to a new life at the joy of being a Benedictine nun." Before she died she signed a letter to her father, begging that a legacy might be settled on the monastery in her behalf, but it is not surprising that the troubles of the times hindered her design from being carried out. This holy child expired on the 7th of August, 1652, and was buried in the religious habit.

Lady Honora
Burke.

August 7.

December 25.

In the evening of Christmas Day in the same year, died our venerable Sister Benedicta Corby, after an illness of about six days, during the greater part of which she

* See Appendix I., No. 9.

was speechless from apoplexy. This edifying religious had reached the hundredth year of her age, having spent twenty in religion. Her family was indeed a saintly one, having given a martyr to the church (Father Ralph Corby, S.J.), and she and her husband had themselves entered the religious state in their old age, he to be a Jesuit and she a Benedictine. They had in all, three sons Jesuits, and two daughters lay-sisters at Brussels. Sister Benedicta's life at Ghent had been a constant example of fervour and piety which had made her a treasure to the community. On Christmas Day she happily recovered her speech and her senses, and was able to receive the last sacraments before she died.

1652.

On the 3rd of April the following year, Dame Dorothy Cary passed to her reward. Though young, she had been confined to the infirmary for some time with a dropsy, which at last carried her off. This excellent little nun had been professed at the early age of sixteen. She had made herself particularly useful with her pen, being expert and industrious in copying, which in those days, when books and printing were so expensive, was very serviceable. She copied many retreats, meditations, &c., for common use. She died piously at the age of thirty, having been professed fourteen years.

1653.
April 3.

On the 28th July, Dame Justina Petre, daughter of Sir Francis Petre, of Cranham, in Essex, was professed, and a year later her sister Dame Catherine, also Dame Paula Hall, and Dame Bridget Savage.

July 28,
1654.
July 14.

We have already stated, while relating the foundation at Boulogne, that the bishop of that diocese objected to the custom established amongst us by authority of the Bishop of Ghent, of saying matins and lauds over-night. He subsequently referred this matter to some of the theologians of the University of Paris, who declared that it was beyond the power of any bishop to give such a dispensation. Accordingly it was decided to send the statutes to Rome for a formal approbation, adding the request that this change might be retained, as well as the other, also permitted by the Bishop of Ghent, of the dispensed members taking meat at a separate table in the refectory, instead of being required to dine in the infirmary, as the original text of the statutes appointed. The Cardinals appointed to examine the affairs of the Regulars, having duly considered the matter, gave their approbation on the 8th of May, 1654, but the formal Brief of Confirmation was not obtained until after the Accession of Pope Alexander VII., who ascended the Papal throne the following year, and issued this Brief, under the date June the 8th, 1658. We give in the Appendix the text of this confirmation, according to an old English version made at Ghent, which we still preserve.* Thus was this matter finally set at rest.

Confirmation
of the
Statutes.

On the 27th of July, 1655, the Flemish member, Sister Martina Decken, died at the comparatively early age of forty-four; her services were much missed by the survivors.

1655.
July 27.

In the course of two or three years, several professions were received. On the 10th of August it was that of Dame Mary Fermor. On the 25th of January, 1656, this was followed by the professions of Dame Victoria and Dame Christina Monson, whose holy aunt, Dame Mary Monson, was thought to have gained for them by her prayers and

August 10.

* See Appendix I., No. 10.

1655.

her penances the grace of religious vocation; and being novice-mistress, she had the happiness of leading them herself to the altar. Dame Valeria Stanley followed on the 15th of August.

During the year 1655, Lady Mary Knatchbull had occasion to render to the bishop an account of the administration, as regards both the temporalities and the spiritualities of the monastery. For the former we refer our readers to the Appendix,* but the Lady Abbess's description of the spiritual state of the community is so full of interest and instruction that we have not hesitated to insert it here in full:—

“Now, as regards the spiritual state of the Monastery. Care is taken that all should be provided with whatever the rule requires in food, clothing and other necessities, so that we may carry out with the greatest firmness, yet with gentleness, whatever the same rule prescribes for the observance of religious discipline.

“By God's grace there is no notable defect either in the community generally or in any particular person; and no rule or statute, however trivial, is so neglected but that its frequent transgression is punished, and suitable means of correction made use of; moreover, penances are cheerfully received by all, so that there is no defect or going backward in virtue, but, on the contrary, progress is being made in regular discipline.

“Great care is taken as regards the needs of the sick, and although by this considerable expense is incurred, yet considering that the rule prescribes this care, I have every hope that God's providence will assist us.

“Some outlay is made also on the Church, but this is in accordance with the spirit of our institute. All the hours of the Divine Office are punctually kept to, as also the weekly Chapter, unless, perhaps, occasionally a just cause occur for dispensing it.

“All confess to the ordinary Confessor, and no other; and extraordinary Confessors. approved by the Bishop, attend at stated times.

“From all this we experience great peace and union in our Monastery; but lest any one should suffer from want of assistance, I have signified to all, in the Bishop's name, that if any one should need an extraordinary Confessor, and for any reason should have a difficulty in asking me for one, she may apply by letter to the Most Reverend Lord Bishop or his Reverend Official, which they all heard with every appearance of gratitude.

“Charity with all its pleasing consequences is flourishing in the Monastery, and we find by experience that this is preserved and increased by regular times of recreating in common, and also by permitting subjects free access to Superiors.

“There does not seem to occur anything else in the spiritual or temporal state of the Monastery with which I ought longer to detain your Lordship. But if you should see fit to request or command anything further, you will always find prompt and ready to execute these commands,

“Your most Reverend Lordship's

“most humble and obedient daughter and servant,

“MARY KNATCHBULL,

“Abbess unworthy.”

* See Appendix I., No. 11.

In the month of March, 1656, the community found themselves obliged to ask for a second priest to act as confessor, for Father Vincent, now an old man, had become so deaf as to be incapacitated for this duty. The Rev. Christopher Green was accordingly appointed. 1656.
Reverend
Christopher
Green.

The following October, news came from Boulogne of the death of Lady Catherine Wigmore, first abbess of that house. She was not more than sixty years of age, but was apparently worn out with labours and self-imposed austerities, added to the infirmities which never left her, and the cares and anxieties attendant on the new foundation, with the many contradictions which the devil had stirred up against it. We need only refer to her mortuary record (which we have fortunately preserved) to point out what a striking example of religious virtue this holy abbess presented, and what a loss her community must have sustained in her death. The following is an extract from the death-bill, which was published in French by her nuns at Boulogne: "Her humility in her dignity, her obedience in her superiority, her patience in adversity and sickness have been singular; her zeal for the glory of God and the observance of regular discipline, her poverty, her modesty, her mortification, her prayer and charity, had never any relaxation. And having advanced always in perfection, she never lost her first fervour." Death of Lady
Catherine
Wigmore.

On the 15th of February, 1657, died Dame Cornelia Corham, who had been professed with her sister, Dame Justina, twenty-one years before. She suffered much in her last sickness of fever, having also a severe cough; and she gave consolation and edification to all by her pious resignation and patience. 1657.
February 15.

Her aunt, Dame Ignatia Coningsby, followed her to the grave five weeks later, being nearly eighty years of age. She had been breaking in health for some time, but had never relaxed in her fervour; and when she had passed away (as we read in her mortuary record) all said, "Now we have lost a saint indeed; doubtless God blessed the house for her sake." March 23.

On the 19th of April, Dame Alexia Maurice died at the age of twenty-nine. The vocation of this religious was a singular example of the various means used by our good God to draw souls to Himself. When she was fifteen years of age, her father, a pious catholic gentleman of Monmouthshire, asked her one day if she would like to be a nun. She answered "Yes," but only to please him, for in reality she had no such wish. Her father immediately sent her to our school at Ghent, where she remained two years as a convictrix, and during this time, God drew her so forcibly to Himself that she begged for admittance into the novitiate, where she gave great satisfaction, and continued with equal fervour during the whole of her religious career. For the last three years of her life she was confined to the infirmary by dropsy, which at last terminated fatally, and she died in peace on St. Elphegus' day, 1657, after having received all the last rites of the Church. April 19

Nearly a year later, we lost one of the brightest lights of our monastery. In the morning of the 8th of April, 1658, the community assisted at the solemn profession of Dame Margaret Carewe, but in the evening of the same day, all were summoned to attend the death-bed of Dame Mary Monson, the novice-mistress. This, our dear sister, appears to have been singularly chosen by our Holy Father from her childhood. When 1658.
Dame Mary
Monson.

1658.

April.

a little girl and at school in England, she had been in the habit of giving treats to her school-fellows on his feast-day, thus to testify her devotion to him. At the age of twenty-two she entered here amongst us, was professed on St. Barnabas' day two years later, and went on ever advancing in religious virtue, for, as was attested after her death, she never relaxed in her first fervour. She was especially distinguished for her love of prayer, her eagerness in accepting humble employments, and her spirit of seclusion, which was shown by her avoidance of conversation with seculars at the grate as much as lay in her power. She was also noted for her love of rule, and it is especially recorded that she never tasted anything out of meal times, that to her dying day she observed all the regular fasts and abstinences, and that she attended the choir steadily till within two days of her death. It is also said that she faithfully practised the twelve degrees of Humility in our Holy Rule, and the chapters on Silence, and that she never spoke ill of any one. Such a life as this could not fail to be closed by a holy death. On the Saturday before Passion Sunday, she was taken very ill after supper, and the following morning was sent to the infirmary. She received the last sacraments on Monday afternoon, as it was evident that she was dying, and she spent the remaining time in fervent prayer, offering her sufferings for the souls in Purgatory, especially for the one that loved God the most on earth. She begged pardon of her sisters for her faults, and gave hearty thanks to God for the great privilege of her vocation to be a child of our Holy Father St. Benedict. At last, between eight and nine o'clock in the evening, she died peacefully and quietly, her confessors, ordinary and extraordinary, being both present. One of the assistants at this happy death-bed expressed surprise that her body did not emit rays of splendour; but, as the writer of her mortuary record observes, "that of Christ Himself was not glorified till the third day." We can have but little doubt that at the Resurrection (*our* Third day, as St. Anselm expresses it) this, our dear Dame Mary, will indeed be surrounded with glory—the glory that our good God gives to the faithful religious who has spent her life in His service and in seeking perfection. Lady Mary Knatchbull, in the customary chapter given on the thirtieth day after a death, affirmed that we never had such an example in all who had died amongst us.

Pontoise.

It was during this year, 1658, that the community at Boulogne removed to Pontoise, near Paris. On the death of Lady Catherine Wigmore, Dame Christina Forster had been chosen to succeed her, and was solemnly blessed in the episcopal palace at Boulogne, on the 27th of May following (1657). She seems to have made an early resolution to transplant the community elsewhere. The nuns had not found the climate of Boulogne healthy, and the situation was an exposed one, it being a frontier town on the sea-coast, which in those stormy times was an occasion of constant anxiety. The following year saw the seaport of Dunkerque fall into the hands of the English under Cromwell, and, fearing that Boulogne might have a similar fate, they decided to move further into the country. Accordingly, permission was obtained from the French King to settle at Pontoise, and the removal was effected on the 9th of May, 1658, the route chosen being through Dieppe and Rouen. They experienced fresh assistance from their former benefactor, Sir Richard Forster, and were further assisted by Lord Walter Montague, Commendatory Abbot of St. Martin's, near Pontoise, and were thus enabled to purchase 14 acres of land, and build a convenient monastery.

On the 12th of January following, Dames Teresa Mannock and Anastasia Maurice were professed at Ghent, and on the 22nd of April the two lay-sisters, Teresa Cannion and Catherine Scroote. 1659.
January 12.
April 22.

The 1st of September was made memorable by the death of Dame Magdalene Digby, the last of our four venerated foundresses, after a lingering illness of cancer in the breast. Of this saintly woman we have already given a short account, but a few words here about her last sickness will not be superfluous. September 1.

As she advanced in years she had been afflicted both by deafness and by numerous infirmities, which made her unable to keep all the fasts and abstinences of the rule, and hence she was treated with much consideration. This filled her with apprehension, lest young and weak souls should be disedified at an ancient giving so poor an example, and she begged Almighty God to afflict her in some way which would be more apparent to others. That very day she was taken ill with a sudden fainting fit, and the cancer began which gave her a seven years' martyrdom before she could attain to her crown. During this long carriage of the cross, our dear Dame Magdalene was tried also with interior sufferings and a terrible fear of eternal punishment; yet for some time, she went about, visited the Blessed Sacrament, prayed much, and was as attentive to rule as her state would allow. But when she had gone on thus for a few months, the cancer growing worse, the doctor ordered that she should be removed to the new rooms, which were not yet being occupied, as it was necessary that she should be separated from others. She continued for a long time in the most acute suffering, supported only by her heroic courage and ardent piety, which seemed to transform her life into a continual prayer. At last, perceiving that she was sinking, the last sacraments were administered by the Rev. Mr. Gerard (who had lately succeeded to Mr. Green as chaplain), and the following morning she peacefully expired. Her mortuary record observes that Dame Magdalene had lived to see a hundred members professed in our monastery, four of whom made their vows on their death-bed. And she was the first at whose funeral all the ceremonies of the Church were fully carried out, dying as she did, in the new buildings; and it is said that the processions and singing on the occasion were truly beautiful. For in these things, as in the building itself, all had to be done by degrees. Lady Lucy Knatchbull's tombstone was taken up, that Dame Magdalene's body might be deposited by her side, and thus these, our two dear mothers, who had been so united in life, were not separated in death.

And now, our four foundresses had all gone to their rest, leaving their great work well begun and flourishing. Through their efforts, two houses dedicated in honour of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception and our Holy Father St. Benedict had been established, and fresh subjects were still flocking to them. Sir Toby Matthews (in his "Life of Lady Lucy") hesitates not to attribute this rapid increase to the notable spirit of union which Lady Lucy had planted in the community: and truly we know that God will never forsake those who are united in Him.

The next profession was that of Dame Viviana Eyre, on the 29th of November.

On the 23rd of February, 1660, our community sustained a great loss in the death of their kind friend, Father Vincent. This estimable man had resided at the monastery ever since the month of April, 1624, and had lost no opportunity of shewing his kind feeling. 1660.
Death of
Father
Vincent.

1660.

When the new buildings were in contemplation, he gave out of his private resources the sum of 6,000 florins (about £500) towards the expenses of it. Towards the end of his life he became so deaf and infirm as to be unable to fulfil his duties as confessor, but he continued to live at Ghent, where he died on the date given above, at the age of eighty-four.

May 31.

Restoration of
King Charles
II.

During this year, King Charles II. was restored to the English throne. The devotion of our convent to the cause of the Stuarts rendered it almost a matter of course that a letter of congratulation was sent to him by the Lady Abbess, who had for some time past taken every opportunity of forwarding his cause. To this letter the king sent the following courteous acknowledgment:

"The Hague, May 31st, 1660.

"My Lady Abbess,

"I have received yⁿ of ye 25th, and I do assure yⁿ y^t as I have, ever since my being in these parts, receiv'd many evidences of y^r good affection to me, so I shall never forget it, but shall allways have a particular kindness for yⁿ and y^r community, and shall take all occasions to oblige yⁿ of w^{ch} yⁿ may assure y^r community. I have directed the Chancellor to send yⁿ a little present of four hundred English pieces, for the supply of y^r present necessities; and you shall find y^t I will do all I can to make y^r condition more easy, and that I am

"Your affectionate friend,

"CHARLES REX." *

August 28.

On the 28th of August in the same year, Dame Mary Minshall was favoured with a miraculous cure from a dangerous sickness. This, if the first, is not the only instance on record of a supernatural favour of the kind in our community. Dame Mary Minshall lived more than thirty years after, dying at last in a good old age.

1661.

The following year, on the 18th of April, Dames Xaveria Pordage, Dorothy Morgan, and Martha Kempe made their profession; the parents of Dame Xaveria came expressly from England to be present at the ceremony, hastening back again for the king's coronation. It is worthy of note that the portions received by the convent for these three subjects at last liquidated the remainder of the debt on the new buildings.†

One other incident occurring this year is deserving of mention, Dame Mary Bedingfeld (the daughter of Matthew Bedingfeld, Esq., who was residing in Brussels) had contracted a complaint which led to a series of severe illnesses. Special medical treatment being considered necessary, she was sent to Brussels to receive it, and was lodged in the English Monastery there—our mother house. After her recovery, she wished to remain where she was, rather than return to Ghent. She obtained the requisite permission, and

* It will be observed that this letter is dated from the Hague on the 31st of May, and it is well known that King Charles II. entered London on May the 29th, which was his birthday; but this apparent discrepancy will be explained if we remember that England had not at that time adopted the new style in the calendar, and thus the day which at the Hague and at Ghent was called May the 31st would be reckoned in England as the 21st, while the day of the king's public entrance into London would be calculated in Flanders as June the 8th. The original of the above letter was lost with the many other valuable papers belonging to the monastery in 1794. We have transcribed the above from the copy made of it by Lady Mary Knatchbull the 2nd, in 1718, and sent by her to "Dodd" the historian, amongst other notes. After his death it found its way, together with his other papers, to the Dean and Chapter (now called the "Old Brotherhood"), the secretary of which kindly lent it to us.

† See Appendix I., No. 12.

formally renewed her vows in the hands of the Archbishop of Mechlin and the Abbess of Brussels, Lady Mary Vavasour, on the 4th of September, 1661, "her portion being 160 florins a yeare during her life"; from which entry in the Brussels account book, it appears that, poor as our monastery was at that time, the Lady Abbess of Ghent thought it proper to pay a pension for one who had left it. There is a tradition that the nuns at Brussels were so pleased with the plaited wimple worn by this, our sister (similar to that which we still wear), that they forthwith adopted the same in their own community.

But in spite of these occasional losses of members by death or otherwise, "the debts and wants of the community still cried aloud," as was said,* and the energetic abbess determined to attempt another foundation. St. Omer and Dunkerque were both suggested, but, as usual, want of means formed the difficulty, and the contradictions encountered at Boulogne had been a serious lesson. Accordingly, Lady Mary Knatchbull, with the Bishop's approval, resolved to go to England and visit King Charles II. in person, in the hope of interesting him in her scheme, and obtaining his assistance. She started on her journey at the end of October, taking with her Dame Mary Caryll and a lay-sister, and escorted by the Rev. Mr. Gerard. The king received her very graciously, and gave her the sum of £3,000 towards her undertaking; and she was fortunate enough to receive valuable presents also from other friends. On returning from England, she and her companions landed at Dunkerque, and there made arrangements with the local magistrates, who expressed their willingness to receive the English nuns, as proposed. The royal patents were signed, and the leave of the Bishop of Ghent obtained, as well as that of His Lordship of Ypres, in whose diocese the town of Dunkerque was situated. Thus, all was satisfactorily arranged for the foundation.

October 31.

In the meantime news was received of the death of two of our sisters at Pontoise. The first was that of the abbess, Lady Christina Forster, who died at the comparatively early age of forty-three, on the 16th of December. She was succeeded by Dame Eugenia Thorold. The other death was that of Dame Lucy Perkins (sometimes written Parkins), on the 4th of February, 1662. On the 20th of March, Dame Margaret Carewe died at Ghent.

December 16.

1662.

February 4.

In the month of May, the colony for Dunkerque set out, and arrived at their destination without accident on the 8th, under the convoy of Father Gerard. A little later a second party joined them, and were left at Dunkerque by the Lady Abbess for some time. The following were the members of this colony, most of whom, however, returned to Ghent as soon as the new community was sufficiently numerous: Dame Mary Caryll, Dame Constantia Savage, Dame Scholastica Heneage, Dame Agatha Webb, Dame Christina Monson, Dame Anastasia Maurice, Dame Xaveria Pordage, Dame Helena Wayte, Dame Flavia Cary, Dame Valeria Stanley, Dame Viviana Eyre, Dame Ignatia Fortescue, Dame Anne Neville, Dame Ursula Butler, Sister Frances Wright and Sister Magdalene Howard; they brought also two postulants.

May 8.

Foundation at Dunkerque.

It was not till the feast of the Visitation, July the 2nd, that they were able to enter the house which had been procured for them outside the city walls. On the 12th of August the first mass was said, and on the Assumption the divine office was solemnly

* MS. of Lady Mary Knatchbull, relating her foundations.

1662. begun in choir, and regular observance established. The convent did not elect an abbess during the first year, but contented themselves with naming Dame Mary Caryll prioress, and for a time she governed the community under this name. The Rev. Michael Gerard (alias Jenison) remained at Dunkerque as chaplain, which office he had held at Ghent for four years, the Rev. Christopher Green having entered the Society of Jesus. He was succeeded at Ghent in his turn by the Rev. Francis Chamberleyne, who had formerly been a captain in the army.

1663. The king found it expedient to make public difficulties about the foundation of the monastery at Dunkerque, and in the month of June, 1663, Dame Mary Caryll, accompanied by Dame Anne Neville and another, made a journey to England to obtain a satisfactory arrangement. All turned out well, and her father, John Caryll, Esq., of Harting and West Grinstead, her uncle, Lord Petre, and other friends made her such handsome donations that on her return in November she found herself in a position to begin the building of the new monastery. It is worthy of remark that in this building (which was not completed for twenty years) valuable assistance was obtained from Dame Mary's brother, Dom Alexius Caryll, O.S.B., a monk of St. Gregory's, at Douay, who was a skilful architect.

On the 28th of November that same year the election of the first abbess took place, our abbess, Lady Mary Knatchbull, being present, on her way to Pontoise. Dame Mary Caryll was chosen, as was of course expected. Her solemn benediction was fixed for St. John the Baptist's day, June the 24th, the following year, at the Abbey of St. Bertin, in the town of St. Omer.

1664. When the appointed time drew near she set out for her destination, taking two companions with her. But on the eve of the benediction, one of the party, Dame Scholastica Heneage, was taken seriously ill and could not attend the ceremony. Her sickness was rapid and fatal, and on the morning of June 25th she breathed her last. Such an event must have greatly marred the joy felt by the religious on the return of their abbess after her benediction, when she arrived with only one of those she had taken with her.

Benediction of
the first
Abbess of
Dunkerque.

Dame
Scholastica
Heneage dies
at St. Omer.

Professions
at Ghent.

We now return to the chronicle of our own monastery. On the 11th of July, 1662, Dame Benedicta Middlemore, a widow, was professed at Ghent; on the 22nd of April, 1663, Dames Lucy Morgan and Mary Bryan, and on the 29th of May, Dame Henrietta Fermor.

On the 12th of January, 1664, occurred the death of Dame Elizabeth Markham. On the 5th of February Sister Martha Law was professed, on the 28th of April Dame Xaveria Paston, the following day Sister Scholastica Beckington, and on the 6th of July Dame Mary Lucy. The latter was the first of her family to enter at Ghent, but she was soon followed by others.

1665. On the 4th of March, 1655, a tragic incident occurred at Pontoise. Lord Carington,* Dame Francisca's father, who was residing in the town, was murdered in his bed by his

* Charles, first Baron Carington, was descended from John Carington, who, in the reign of Henry IV. changed his name to Smyth to escape the royal resentment, having taken part in the rebellion of the Earls of Huntingdor, Salisbury, and Kent. His descendant was created Baron Carington and Viscount of Beresford in 1664. He married the daughter of Sir John Caryll of Harting, Knight, so his daughter, Dame Francisca, and Lady Mary Caryll of Dunkirk were cousins.

own valet, for the sake of plunder. He was buried in the Church of St. Maclou, and his son and successor had an epitaph put up to his memory. The murderer was apprehended and condemned to death, and, according to the French custom, broken on the wheel. After this sad event, Dame Francisca returned to Ghent, and ended her life in the house of her profession.

The following year, the Lady Abbess found herself obliged to undertake a third foundation. The recently installed Bishop of Ypres, M. Martin de Praets, formerly a Canon of Ghent, wished to have some of the English Benedictine nuns in his cathedral town, and wrote to Lady Mary Knatchbull, begging her to send Dame Marina Beaumont to establish a house there. This was done, and the Lady Abbess sent also with her Dames Flavia Cary, Helen Wayte, Ignatia Fortescue, and Viviana Eyre, from Dunkerque. They entered the house taken for them by the bishop on the 22nd of May, the necessary licenses having been procured from the King of Spain and the magistrates of the town. Dame Marina Beaumont was nominated abbess, but not blessed till four years later.

1665.
Foundation
at Ypres.

The professions of Dame Elizabeth Yarburgh, Sister Agnes With, and Sister Mary Matchett took place at Ghent that year and the following January respectively, and the deaths of Dame Barbara Fortescue and Dame Bridget Savage occurred also in 1666 (Feb. 15th and August 29th). On the 3rd of November, Sister Agnes Pickering, a very holy soul, died at Pontoise.

1666.
January 13.

It was about the year 1666 or 1667 that the two little daughters of Sir John and Lady Warner were received into our school at Ghent. Their holy parents had made an agreement to separate, that they might dedicate themselves to God, he in the Society of Jesus, and she in the convent of Poor Clares, at Gravelines. Their two children, however, did not remain long at Ghent, since Lady Warner, for good reasons, thought it better that they should be nearer to her. The priest of the Gravelines convent accordingly went to Ghent to fetch them, bearing a letter from their mother to the Lady Abbess. Lady Warner's biographer gives the following account of his reception in our monastery:—

"This civil letter was kindly received by the Lady Abbess of Gant, who made an addition to her former favours by the kind entertainment she gave the gentleman: for being of so obliging a nature as that the removal of the children from her sight could not remove them from her heart, she thought she could not give a better demonstration of her love than by complying with what their friends thought best for them. This made her part with the children with so much cheerfulness and satisfaction as put the good Pastor into admiration. The prospect she had of their being fortunes, and of the probability of their entering amongst them, if they stay'd there, could not so far enter into her thoughts as to cause a regret at their departure; which is a great confirmation of that worth, prudence and generosity which all that know her Ladyship, not without reason, admire her for."*

1667.

These two children afterwards entered the monastery at Dunkerque, under the names of Agnes and Ignatia. The former died of fever at the age of thirty-six on

* "Life of Lady Warner," by a Catholic Gent., London, 1692.

1667.

the 10th of May, 1696. Her sister Dame Ignatia survived some years, and died of a cancer on the 18th of October, 1711.

January 27.

Several professions were made at Ghent during the year 1667. The first was that of the venerable widow Dame Scholastica Plowden (née Audley) who had survived two husbands. By the first, Richard Butler, Esq., she was the mother of Dame Ursula Butler. In the month of November, Sister Mary Forster and Sister Marina Morgan were professed.

This year saw also the death of Rev. Francis Chamberleyne, who was succeeded by the Rev. Francis Green; the latter remained at Ghent for very many years.

December 21.

On the 21st of December, Lady Eugenia Thorold, third abbess of Pontoise, who had been professed at Ghent with Dame Margaret Markham twenty-eight years before, departed this life. Our sisters at Pontoise spent a sad Christmas. They elected in her place Dame Anne Neville, who had removed thither from Ghent only the year previously, at the earnest solicitation of Lady Eugenia, who held her in the greatest veneration. While at Ghent, Dame Anne Neville had filled successively the offices of mistress of pensioners, mistress of novices and prioress, and in each of these, Dame Eugenia, as convictrix, novice, and lastly as a nun, had been her disciple. Lady Anne was solemnly blessed in the month of February, 1668.

1668.

1669.

Conversion of
the Duke of
York.

The year 1669 is memorable in our annals as being that of the conversion of the Duke of York, afterwards King James II. We have already seen how loyal and faithful was the spirit entertained by our community towards the royal family of the Stuarts, and the veneration felt by King Charles for our two abbesses, Mary Roper and Mary Knatchbull. The king's brother shared this feeling, and his prolonged visits to Ghent gave him many opportunities of manifesting it. It was actually in Ghent that he was reconciled with the Church early in 1669, after duly considering the step during the previous year. There can be no doubt that from this time his friendship with our convent was strongly cemented. A relic of this connexion still exists in the shape of a red chalice-veil, in our sacristy, made from one of his banners, having on it a crown with the initials "J.R." worked in gold. These emblems show that the gift was of a later period than that of which we are now speaking, and probably dates from the time of his exile when king. It is known in our community that amongst the papers unhappily lost at the French Revolution were many valuable documents relating both to the conversion of James II. and the restoration of his brother, as well as a voluminous and interesting correspondence between them and our house.* Certain it is that the devotion of our sisters to the cause of the Stuarts lasted as long as there were any of this royal line living. Many of them belonged to staunch royalist families, the members of which had suffered exile and the confiscation of their goods in the cause, and loyalty was in their very blood.

It was likewise during this year (1669) that Lady Marina Beaumont, first abbess of Ypres, received the abbatial benediction; and on the 8rd of May she received the

* King Charles II. when in exile was much indebted to Lady Mary Knatchbull for several services which she found means of rendering him, such as inclosing his letters to and from England in her covers, and even advancing sums of money to some of his faithful followers whose property was confiscated. For the latter good work, our convent suffered afterwards, as the money was not always repaid.

profession of the first nun of this community, Dame Josepha Carewe; but it was the only one made for a number of years, for somehow, in spite of the efforts made by those concerned, this foundation did not flourish like the others. Dame Josepha Carewe died in a few years, and, after a time, Lady Beaumont thought of turning the house into a foundation for Irish nuns, and, with this view, Dame Alexia Legge and Dame Joseph O'Ryan (both of whom were Irish) came thither from Dunkerque. On the failure of this attempt, these two nuns repaired to Dublin, and then to Paris to prosecute their enterprise in that city, but Dame Alexia died there, and Dame Mary Joseph returned to Dunkerque for a time. The project of an Irish foundation was not abandoned, however, as we shall see further on.

1669.

Project of an
Irish
foundation.

The monastery at Dunkerque meanwhile went on very prosperously. Lady Mary Caryll is said to have governed her community no less by her example and the sweetness of her disposition than by her talent. During this year 1669 she was suffering much in her health, and the physicians declared that she had an incurable cancer. But she had a singular devotion to St. Francis Xavierius, and at the end of a novena made to him she was completely cured, which blessing she attributed to the intercession of the saint. This has been attested in the dedication of a book entitled "Devotions of St. Francis Xavierius," printed towards the end of the 17th century.

Miraculous
cure of Lady
Mary Caryll.

On the 5th of October, the feast of St. Placid, Dame Maura Fitzwilliam and Dame Cecilia Tasburgh made their solemn profession in our Monastery.

About this time the Bishop of Ghent, M. Eugène d'Allamont, deeply concerned at the state of poverty to which our sisters were reduced, made a touching appeal to the charity of the faithful of his diocese in their behalf. In this appeal* he described the sufferings of the nuns as the result of the sad discord and seditions in England, where they had lost a large sum of money, and also of their generosity to certain members of the royalist party when in exile, who had indeed promised them ample remuneration, but had failed in the fulfilment of their promises. The following year, as the state of things did not improve, he allowed a few of the religious to go to England and solicit help from their friends, each being accompanied by a "noble and discreet matron." The nuns chosen for this responsible task were Dames Paula Knatchbull,† Lucy Morgan, Scholastica Plowden, and one other—apparently one of the Symons.

1670.

Two deaths occurred during the year 1669; those of Dame Mary Bryan on the 9th of November, and Sister Bennet Walton. The following year, on the 31st of August, August 31. Sister Lucy Bacon, the first professed at Ghent, died also.

Sister Athanasia Middleton was professed on the 10th of October.

On the 31st of March, 1671, Anne Hyde, Duchess of York, died in London, at the age of thirty-three. She had been reconciled to the Church the previous August by Father Christopher Davenport (alias Hunt), a Franciscan, and he also attended her death-bed. Like her husband, she had been a frequent visitor at our monastery, and

1671.

* See Appendix I., No. 13.

† Dame Paula Knatchbull had accompanied the first colony to Boulogne, but had returned to Ghent a short time afterwards.

1671. had been a generous benefactress, in memory of which her anniversary was observed by a solemn requiem mass so long as our sisters lived in Flanders.*

1672. Towards the end of the 17th century, professions became gradually more rare in our community, and instead of two and three at a time several times in the year, one in a year became the average, and even this was discontinued during the last ten or twelve years, so that the community, which in 1650 had almost outgrown the size of the house, was reduced in 1700 to a very small number. The reasons for this were probably several. Fervour was on the wane among the English Catholics, who were spending the energies formerly employed on the sustaining of imprisonment and martyrdom in dissensions with each other. Apostasies were not infrequent, and, altogether, the spirit fostered amongst them was not the most likely to produce religious vocations. And then the state of the Low Countries was not inviting. War seemed to be the order of the day. Ghent became for a time the property of France, during the campaign of Louis XIV., but in the end the treaty of 1678 restored it to Spain. Again, we may add that the multiplication of religious houses necessarily lessened the number in each.

1673. The death of Sister Frances Wright, the sister of Father Peter Wright, the martyr,
November 10. occurred at Ypres, whither she had been sent from Dunkerque, on the 10th of November, 1673.

1675. In the year 1675, a little difference arose between our community and that of Dunkerque on the subject of Dame Valeria Stanley. This nun had been one of the colony that had first begun that monastery in 1662; but whereas most of the others had returned to Ghent as soon as the new house was sufficiently established (with the exception indeed of Dame Constantia Savage, Dame Agatha Webb and a few others who were destined to remain altogether), Dame Valeria stayed some thirteen years longer, so that Lady Mary Caryll looked upon her as having become one of her own community. Apparently, however, this was not Lady Mary Knatchbull's intention, and in course of time she summoned her to return to the house of her profession. To this she met with opposition from the Lady Abbess of Dunkerque, and at last the question was referred by the Bishop of Ypres to the Vicars Capitular of Ghent, the see being then vacant. The matter ended by Dame Valeria Stanley returning to Ghent, where she ended her days.

1678. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1678, our venerable abbess, Mary Knatchbull, kept her golden jubilee. Such an event was unusual in the community at that time, and was kept with as much solemnity as their limited means would allow. During the same year she professed Dame Anna Maria de Moll, and in the two following, Dame Magdalen Lucy and Dame Anna Westby.

1681. About the year 1681, the establishment at Ypres not meeting with much success, Lady Marina Beaumont tried to make arrangements with the nuns at Paris† to transfer

* In a MS. book of notes on the calendar, dated 1752, we find the following entry: "On ye 31 of March is to be Sung a Requiem Mass for her Royal Highness Ann Dutches of York, for ever to be kept on ye 10th of April, according to our Account." Here again our attention is drawn to the non-acceptance of the new style in England at the time of the Duchess's death; the 31st of March there being identical with the 10th of April on the Continent.

† Now at St. Benedict's Priory, The Mount, near Colwich.

her house to them. This step did not meet with the approbation of her companions, who complained to Lady Mary Knatchbull about it. The latter had continued to hope that the project of establishing an Irish community at Ypres might be realised, and she communicated with Lady Mary Caryll on the subject. 1681.

The following year, on the 27th of August, Lady Beaumont died, leaving in her monastery only Dame Flavia Cary, and a lay-sister, for the two or three others who had been with them in the beginning had returned to Ghent and Dunkerque. Lady Caryll now went herself to Ypres, accompanied by a few of her nuns, and they chose Dame Flavia Cary abbess, with a clear understanding that the Ypres house was in future to be regarded as an Irish monastery. Dame Joseph Ryan returned thither, and Lady Caryll sent also Dame Elizabeth Poulton and Dame Josepha O'Bryan; Lady Knatchbull sent Dame Ursula Butler, and Lady Anne Neville sent Dame Christina White and Dame Joseph Butler from Pontoise. 1682.

After a while, Dame Joseph Ryan and Dame Ursula Butler were sent to Ireland in quest of subjects, but Dame Ursula Butler died in England on her road (April 10th, 1685.) Dame Joseph Ryan went on to Ireland, and settled herself there under the protection of the Archbishop of Dublin. In the meanwhile, Lady Flavia Cary died at Ypres (on the 20th of February, 1686), and was succeeded by one of the Pontoise nuns — Dame Mary Joseph Butler. 1686.

It was about this time that King Charles II. expired, and his brother, the Duke of York mounted the throne. We can easily imagine the joy felt by our community at Ghent, on hearing the news that the king had been reconciled to the Church on his death-bed, and they must have offered many fervent prayers for his soul. He had made himself such a real benefactor to our monastery both by his kind interest and his gifts of money, that gratitude alone would have suggested such a return, and, indeed, prayer for our benefactors has been a constant tradition in our convent. We will hope that God in his mercy listened to these supplications.

The Duke of York, who now ascended the throne under the name of James II., did not forget his friendly feeling for the monastery at Ghent. Soon after his accession, he wrote the following letter to the Lady Abbess: King James II.

“Whitehall, Jan. 20th, 1686.

“Madam,

“I would not have yⁿ imagine y^t I have been ye less sensible of y^r letters and good prayers because of my silence; for I am highly mindfull both of them and your former signal services; but as ye Almighty, by his prophet, speaking to comfort his people, useth this expression—‘he is silent in his love,’—so I, his vice-gerent, use ye same expression to yⁿ: for, till I have settled ye affairs of my kingdom, I will keep in silence and reserve w^t I intend; w^{ch} is to have y^r Cloyster, our Darling monastery, ye first in my kingdom. Then yⁿ shall find I will not only make good my brother’s promises, but add new favours, to show you how much I am,

“Madam, your affectionate friend,

“JAMES REX.”*

* This letter is copied from the same MS. which we mentioned on page 38 (note). The original, with all the re of King James’ autograph letters to our convent, was lost in 1794.

1686.

We all know how Almighty God, in his inscrutable designs, did not suffer the king's plan, mentioned in this letter to be realised, and permitted him, by a series of heart-rending trials and misfortunes, to make atonement for his early faults. There seems to be no doubt about the sincerity of his conversion, and it is consoling to reflect that he knew how to make a good use of these trials, and to remember that, however great his imprudence, he could never be persuaded to forsake his religion.

We will now resume the history of the Irish foundation. Before James II. had been long on the English throne, the discord, which soon ripened into the well-known revolution, commenced, and his position in England was rendered very insecure. It was otherwise, however, in Ireland, where the great majority of the people continued to be very faithful to him. He accordingly spent much of his time there, and thought it would be possible and even expedient to establish in Dublin a royal monastery. At his request Lord Tyrconnel, the Viceroy of Ireland, communicated with the abbesses of Pontoise and Ypres on the subject, and it was decided that the attempt should be made.

1687.
Irish founda-
tion.

In the month of July, 1687, Dame Margaret Markham with three others started from Pontoise, and about the same time Lady Abbess Butler left Ypres with all the members of her small community, the monastery in that town being left under the protection of the Grand Vicars, in case any fresh outbreak in Ireland should oblige the nuns to return. The Pontoise party had a bad and stormy voyage with so many misadventures that they were delayed two whole months. One of their number Dame Anne Neville of Holt* met her death by a fall at Milford Haven, where the ship touched.†

Royal
Monastery in
Dublin.

In the meanwhile the little party from Ypres had arrived in London, and the Lady Abbess presented herself to the Queen at Whitehall, wearing her cowl. On the 8th of October they again set out, and arrived in Dublin on the 31st. Lord Tyrconnel had taken a house for them in Great Ship Street, and thither they repaired, being joined by Dame Mary Joseph Ryan. Dame Margaret Markham with the others from Pontoise arrived soon after, and the new establishment was commenced with every promise of success. Many good families sent their children thither for education, and Lady Joseph Butler might have received several postulants: but she thought it better to wait and see how the English revolution ended, and what effect it would have upon Ireland before taking any further steps. King James visited the convent frequently, coming over to Ireland from France, and it is said that he was present at the golden jubilee of Dame Margaret Markham, which was celebrated with great splendour. During their residence in Dublin the nuns heard of the death of Lady Anne Neville, of Pontoise (December 15th, 1689). They also buried one of their own number, Dame Susanna Fletcher, likewise from Pontoise.

1690.

Its failure.

The following year (1690) was made memorable by the Battle of the Boyne, in which the king was defeated, and the hopes of the Jacobites crushed. At the first alarm the Lady Abbess sent all the pensioners home, and when King William's army entered Dublin, she and the other nuns took refuge in a neighbouring house, where

* She was of a different family from Lady Abbess Neville.

† From the Pontoise MSS.

they succeeded in saving the church plate and in escaping notice. But it was no longer safe for them to remain in Ireland, and the Lady Abbess, in spite of the remonstrances of the Duke of Ormond, her relative, departed immediately for Flanders. All followed her example except Dame Mary Joseph Ryan, who, with a perseverance deserving of better success, remained through the storm under the protection of the Archbishop of Dublin, hoping for better times.*

The Irish foundation was apparently a failure, and the nuns from Pontoise (including those who had for a time resided at Ypres) returned to their own monastery. Lady Mary Joseph Butler, however, would not give up her charge, and she remained at Ypres for several years, with no company save that of four lay-sisters, and in great poverty. So hopeless did the prospect seem that the bishop advised that the house should be sold and the establishment given up, but the courageous abbess would not consent to this, and she remained where she was, patiently awaiting the dawn of better days, which came at last, as we shall see.

We will now return to the affairs of our own monastery. During the past few years two Ghent nuns had died at the other houses, Dame Constantia Savage at Dunkerque (April the 1st, 1687,) and Dame Mary Bedingfeld at Brussels (April the 1st, 1685), where she was actually holding the office of prioress. The professions had been received of Dame Mary Knatchbull, great niece to the Lady Abbess, in 1684, and of Dame Scholastica Gerard in 1686. The latter was the daughter of Colonel Richard Gerard, an ardent royalist and noted warrior. A year later Dame Constantia Howard made her profession at the age of sixteen. She was fifth daughter of Henry, the sixth Duke of Norfolk, by his second wife.† After the death of her father in 1684, Lady Catherine, as she was called, expressed a wish to enter religion, and her uncle, the celebrated Cardinal Howard, recommended to her the Dominican convent, which he had founded near Brussels, and which was at that time established at "The Spellekens," in that city. However, she preferred the Benedictine Order, so she entered amongst us at Ghent, and was professed in 1687. It was through Dame Constantia's generosity that we received the set of red velvet vestments which bear embroidered on them the arms of the Duke of Norfolk, and also a white cope which was in use until quite recently. Her sister Anne appears to have become a Teresian nun in the English convent at Antwerp,‡ and she had several cousins at the Spellekens, daughters of her uncle, Bernard Howard.

Of the members sent by Lady Mary Knatchbull to the various houses founded by her, the greater number from Dunkerque and Ypres had returned after a time. Of those sent to Pontoise, two alone came back to Ghent, Dame Paula Knatchbull and Dame Francisca Carington. The latter returned soon after her father's murder, making some intermediate stay at Dunkerque.

On the 1st of February, 1692, Dame Aldegonde Finch died at Ghent.

In the year 1694 our sisters received a visit from the good old Earl of Perth, who, in a letter dated September the 17th, gives the following pleasing account of the impression made on him by Lady Mary Knatchbull:—

* She returned at last to Dunkirk about the year 1700, and died nineteen years later at a very advanced age.

† See Appendix II., No. 8.

‡ Now Lanherne in Cornwall.

1690.

1687.

1692.

1694

Visit of the Earl of Perth

1694.

"My Lady Abbess is one of the wonderfullest old women I ever saw; she is 85 years of age, and neither by her face, her walking, her discourse, nor her writing could any one judge her to be above 55. She was most obliging." And of Dame Constantia Howard he adds:—"A most virtuous Benedictine nun at Ghent, of excellent parts and admirable virtue."

November.

In the month of November, 1694, Dame Mary Minshall, who had been favoured with a miraculous cure thirty years before, departed this life. There were a great many deaths in our convent during the last fifteen years of the Seventeenth century. Dames Eugenia Pordage, Xaveria Paston and Henrietta Fermor appear to have died between the years 1693 and 1696. The last named had been long an invalid, and had undergone much treatment from physicians.

Amongst the relics of this period which have come down to us is an interesting antiphonal, copied by Dame Mary Joseph Lawson, for the use of the Lady Abbess. It is of folio size, and beautifully transcribed in a clear print hand. The chant has been pronounced by a competent judge to be in a good style; but we do not know what edition it was that she selected. The dedication to Lady Mary Knatchbull, on the first page, bears the date of June the 23rd, 1683.

1696.
March 6.Death of
Lady Mary
Knatchbull.State of the
Convent.

On the 6th of March, 1696, died our venerable abbess, Mary Knatchbull, at the advanced age of eighty-six, having spent sixty-seven years in holy religion, during nearly forty-six of which she had governed her monastery with singular wisdom and ability. The temporalities she had administered with skill, and for some time with success, though afterwards a series of losses and reverses frustrated all her endeavours, so that, after paying off nearly all the debts which she encountered at her accession, she left the convent at her death in almost greater straits than ever. Of its spiritual progress, however, no one who knows much about this gifted woman can entertain any doubt, and she had lived to see two of the three colonies which she had founded in a flourishing state. The third, which she had undertaken at the request of others, was not so successful, and even later, when better times came, it long continued to be but a small community.* As regards the numbers in our own monastery, we have already explained how sensibly they had declined. In 1650, the dames for the choir numbered forty-one; in 1696, only twenty. In addition to the reasons which we have already suggested for this, we must remember that English religious houses on the continent were gradually multiplying during these years, which must naturally have affected the numbers in those first established.

The following testimony to Lady Mary Knatchbull's merits, written in 1718 by her namesake and successor, may be found interesting. We copy it from the original, lent to us by the members of the "Old Brotherhood:"

"These Ladys† had good capacitys, solid piety, prudence & zeal for ye spiritual & temporal advantage of ye Community, particularly ye Lady Mary Knatchbull whose uncommon reach of zeal of propagating her Order gave beginning to the three monasteries

* The monastery of Ypres is especially interesting as being the only one of our Order which remained in Flanders through the Revolution. At present (1893) it is in a more flourishing state than it ever was before; the numbers are rising and the school is successful.

† i.e., the first seven abbesses.

of Pontoise, Dunkirk and Ipres, tis incredible w^t troubles her Ladyship underwent in procuring ye Establishment of these three Houses, had not her merits secured her interest wth ye chief nobility of ye French Court & Rome, she had scarce succeeded in her enterprises. She was not less successful in her services to ye Crown of England, letters y^t concerned 'King Charles ye 2nd's Restoration being dispatch'd under her Covers wth many other signal services dureing ye time of his exile in these counterys. Ye Prince frequently visited & was entertained in our Cloyster."

Truly we must all feel that Lady Mary Knatchbull was a great woman, and one to whom our convent is much indebted. She certainly did her part towards increasing the respect ever felt amongst us for the name of Knatchbull, which was adorned by so chosen, a soul and so eminent a superior as was our foundress, Lady Lucy.



BOOK THE THIRD.
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

A.D. 1696 to 1781.

1696.

The long period of Lady Mary Knatchbull's government had witnessed many vicissitudes in our abbey of Ghent, and the state of things in 1696 was very different from what it had been in 1650 in more respects than one. The death of one superior and the election of another had become a rare event, and had been witnessed by very few of the community then living. The coming election, therefore, was looked upon as especially momentous.

After the funeral of the venerable abbess and the usual three days' retreat, the convent, accordingly, assembled to choose her successor. The following were the members of the chapter:

Dame Frances Symons, Prioress.
Dame Mary Joseph Lawson, First Dean.
Dame Agnes Wakeman, Second Dean.
Dame Justina Petre, Third Dean and Sacristan.
Dame Mary Fermor, Fourth Dean.
Dame Teresa Mannock, Novice-mistress and Chantress.
Dame Francisca Carington, Depositary.
Dame Victoria Monson, Celleraire.
Dame Maura Fitzwilliams, Portress.
Dame Valeria Stanley, Thourier.
Dame Anna Maria de Moll, Infirmarian.
Dame Viviana Eyre, Guardrobe.
Dame Paula Hall, Assistant to the Parlour.
Dame Mary Lucy, Chaplain.
Dame Apollonia Porter, Second Chaplain.
Dame Mary Magdalene Lucy, Assistant Celleraire.
Dame Anne Westby, Assistant Sacristan.
Dame Mary Knatchbull, Assistant Novice-mistress.
Dame Scholastica Gerard, Assistant Thourier.
Dame Constantia Howard, Assistant Portress.

Lady Justina
Petre, fifth
Abbess.

The votes of the electors were centred upon Dame Justina Petre, a religious of the mature age of sixty, who had already spent more than forty years in religion, having been one of the first professed by her venerated predecessor. It would appear that she had a difficult task before her, for it could be no easy matter to take the place of so striking a character as Lady Mary Knatchbull, especially as the greater part of the

1696.

convent had never known another superior; but the excellent spirit of union and regularity which prevailed in the monastery rendered this easier than it might have been.

The new abbess was the second daughter of Sir Francis Petre, of Cranham in Essex, Knight, who had been named a baronet by Charles II. when in exile, which title, however, has not been generally recognised in the family pedigrees. One of her brothers* was the celebrated Father Edward Petre, Privy Councillor and Confessor to King James II., and she had also two other brothers in the society, and a sister (Dame Catherine) in our own community, who, however, did not live to see her abbess.

The temporal affairs of our house did not wear an encouraging aspect when Lady Justina took up the reins of government. For nine years no dame had been professed, and consequently no dowry received. Former dowries had been mainly spent in discharging the heavy debt contracted with the Hobrouck family for the building of the monastery; the annuity of £500 promised by King Charles II. had long ceased to be paid, owing to the misfortunes of the Royal Family, and the state of Catholic affairs in England was not such as to hold out many hopes of recovering former losses there. The most assured income that our convent was actually receiving was the pension of £200 per annum, which Sir Charles Sedley was paying for his wife, Catherine Savage, Lady Sedley. This Lady Sedley. poor lady had been for many years afflicted with mental derangement. In the year 1661 she became acquainted with our abbess, Lady Mary Knatchbull, when she visited England, and conceived a great wish to come back with her to Ghent. Her husband, glad to have her removed and cared for, offered to give to the convent £400 a year for a time and £200 for her life, in return for their care of her, which was gratefully accepted, and she remained in the guest-quarters of our monastery till her death in the following century.

But the debts and liabilities of a large household had gradually increased, and in the very first year of Lady Justina's prelatore, the Bishop of Ghent, M. Philip Van der Noot, sent her a letter (dated October the 1st, 1696) authorising her to leave the inclosure herself and permit some others to do so, for the purpose of seeking assistance from their relations and friends.† He stipulated, however, that each of the questors should have a discreet companion, with a lay-sister to attend them, and should not be out of the inclosure longer than six weeks. It seemed a melancholy necessity for Benedictines to leave their peaceful cloister and mix again with the world, and especially such a world as Protestant England was at that time; but it was an extreme case and called for an extreme remedy.

Permission is given to beg.

Beyond this we have but few reminiscences of Lady Justina Petre's short term of government. It was not very eventful and she received no professions. We still possess a memorial of her, a fine relic of St. Placidus, the proto-martyr of our Order. It is in a handsome silver reliquary, on which are engraved the words "Sancte Placide ora pro me, Justina Petre."

Our fifth abbess died on the 7th of December, 1698, after only two years and a half of prelatore. Our great feast of the Immaculate Conception was that year a sad one.

Death of Lady Justina.

* There appears to be a good deal of obscurity about the pedigree of this branch of the Petre family. One account makes Father Edward Petre the brother, and another the cousin, of our abbess. We cannot say which statement is correct.

† See Appendix I., No. 14.

1698.

Lady Magdalene Lucy,
sixth Abbess.

Lady Justina was succeeded by Dame Magdalene Lucy, the daughter of Edward Lucy, Esq., of Warwickshire, of an old Catholic family. She was a much younger person than her predecessor, vigorous and managing. The unsatisfactory state of our finances did not dismay her, and her great talent for business enabled her to do great service to the community during the five short years that she governed it. Although it pleased God that, like her predecessor, she should receive no professions, she nevertheless succeeded, with the help of a few charitable friends, in maintaining the monastery, and even clearing it of a good many previous debts. Yet, even from another point of view, it was rather disheartening to see the community growing sensibly smaller. During the space of four years they had buried Dame Viviana Eyre, Dame Anna Maria de Moll, and Dame Mary Lucy, and still no one came to fill the vacant places.

Decrease of
numbers.

Ypres.

One novice had, indeed, gone through a noviceship in our house—Sister Xaveria Arthur—but she had promised herself to the abbess of Ypres, and was not professed at Ghent. The forlorn state of the Ypres monastery rendered it impossible to make a noviceship there, so the Ghent superiors willingly received her for her probation, with the understanding that she should make her vows at Ypres. When the time came, however,—it must have been about the end of 1696 or beginning of 1697—the Bishop of Ypres absolutely refused to consent to her profession. The destitution of the monastery had filled him with apprehension, and fearing that it would only be a burthen to the diocese, he wished it altogether abandoned. In vain did the courageous abbess and fervent novice persevere in their entreaties—for four years he was inexorable. At last, towards the end of the year 1700, he gave his consent to the profession; another novice had presented herself, and things looked more hopeful. Four nuns from Pontoise came for the occasion, and remained at Ypres for a time, to assist in once more forming a community. Dame Margaret Markham was nominated Prioress, having arrived on the 28th of November, 1700, accompanied by Dames Scholastica Bruning, Eugenia Green, and Laurentia Lawson. The profession took place on the 9th of December, and was shortly followed by that of the other novice, Dame Josepha O'Connor; where she had passed her noviceship is not recorded. A few more postulants soon arrived, and it must have been a great joy to our sisters at Ghent to feel that this house was at last placed on a satisfactory footing and was likely to continue.

1700.

Revival of the
Convent at
Ypres.

We have a note of an incident in the time of Lady Magdalene Lucy which is not without its interest. About the close of the year 1700, a Flemish servant was engaged as steward and general man of business. The contract drawn up between him and the Lady Abbess (which we still possess) shows that the articles of agreement were signed by the whole chapter, so important was it considered—and perhaps so rare also—to secure a really trusty servant in Flanders, where English ladies bound to inclosure, were necessarily at some disadvantage. The text of the contract will be found quaint and amusing.* By it Livine Baesbanck, as he was called, bound himself to serve the monastery in mason work, tiling, carpentering, and all kinds of work, “except only the going with the wheelbarrow, and the fetching or carrying of graines, either within or without the Monastery.” The Lady Abbess and convent, on their side, promised to keep

* See Appendix I., No. 15.

him provided with "clothes, linnen and woollen, hatt, stockens, shoes, &c," also with food, medical attendance, and all necessaries, and pay him every week "one shilling Flemish in money during his life over and above the vayles or profit which the sayd Baesbanck otherwise may gett." They promised, further, that after his decease he should be buried at the expense of the convent, which should also procure thirty masses for his soul within two months from his death. The names of the chapter, written at the head of this document, include that of Dame Francisca Carington, but this is slightly erased with a pen, for this good religious, who was upwards of seventy years old, was on her death bed, and quite unable to be present at the meeting of the chapter. She expired two days later, January the 2nd, 1701.

1700.

The death of King James II., which took place the following September, was no subject of indifference to our community. It must have been a disappointment both to them and to our sisters of Pontoise, to whom he and his queen had been exceptionally kind. In the event of his restoration they might have hoped for much temporal help. His son, the "Chevalier de St. George," was personally unknown to them, though later on he testified his good will towards our sisters by several kind letters. During the latter years of King James, he appears to have been as frequent a visitor at Pontoise (which is within easy distance of Paris) as he had been at Ghent during his residence in Flanders; and a daughter of his, Arabella Fitz-James (in religion Dame Ignatia), was professed in that house, where she died comparatively young in 1704.

1701.
Death of King
James II.

It was about this time that the famous war of the Spanish succession broke out, the circumstances of which are well known to every student of modern history. On the death of Charles II., King of Spain, A.D. 1700, the French took possession of our city of Ghent with others in Flanders, in the name of Philip Duke of Anjou, the grandson of Louis XIV. and pupil of the great Fénelon, whom they proclaimed King of Spain and the Netherlands as Philip V. This title being contested by the Archduke Charles of Austria, war was proclaimed; the French being joined by Spain, Bavaria and Cologne, and the Austrians by England, Holland, Prussia, Savoy, and Portugal. For several years our town of Ghent was in the neighbourhood of war. The English army, under Queen Anne and Marlborough, chose it for their winter quarters; there were sometimes as many as twenty-four regiments there, and they set up a Protestant chapel where English service was conducted for the military on Sundays. Our sisters must have had very mixed feelings about the neighbourhood of their countrymen, and the vicinity of a Protestant chapel could not have been very grateful to them. Nor was much sympathy felt for the politics of a queen who could occupy a throne to the prejudice of her own brother, the rightful heir.

On the 7th of July, 1703, Lady Magdalene Lucy died somewhat prematurely, being under fifty years of age. Like her two predecessors, she had not received a single profession: only fourteen dames assembled for the election of her successor, and the prospects of the community looked rather discouraging. Dame Scholastica Gerard was chosen in her place. We have already alluded to her parentage, and she was related both to the Gerards of Garswood and to those of Bryn, in Lancashire.

1703.
July 7.

1705.

It was during the first years of her prelature that poor Lady Sedley died. She was buried in our church, and an epitaph put up to her memory.* Her death deprived our convent of the £200 per annum which had been regularly paid for her maintenance, and this would have been a very serious loss, but that Almighty God (who was far from forsaking His servants) now sent them subjects whose dowries were as opportune for the temporalities as their qualities for the spiritualities and general service of the convent. For nearly twenty years Dame Constantia Howard had held the honoured place of youngest religious, and now at last she began to see junior sisters rising round her. The first of these was Dame Magdalene Lucy, who inherited the virtues as well as the name of her aunt; she was professed about the year 1705. She was followed, two years later, by Dame Cecilia Tyldesley, one of a well-known Lancashire family of "recusants." In the course of a few years the community received also Dames Augustina and Frances Blundell, Dame Winifride Lucy, Dame Scholastica Stanley and Dames Placida and Flavia Tempest. The two Blundells† were the daughters of William Blundell of Crosby, Esq., and his wife Mary, née Eyre. The latter, being left a widow, accompanied her daughters to Ghent, and meditated entering the novitiate herself, when God called her away to a better life. She died on the 2nd of December, 1707, and was buried in our church.‡

1709.

Dame Placida and Dame Flavia Tempest belonged to the branch of the Tempest family resident at Broughton Hall, in Yorkshire, the members of which were noted alike for their devotion to the royalist cause and their adherence to the ancient faith, for which double crime their grandfather, Sir Stephen Tempest, had had his estates confiscated by the parliament under Cromwell. Our community continued for almost a hundred years to count members of this family. The two we have just named were the first to enter, and were professed in the years 1709 and 1710 respectively. In the month of

Professions.

1711.

August, 1711, Dame Gertrude Clifford and Dame Helen White were admitted to profession together. The former was the daughter of the second Lord Clifford, and was followed, before many years had elapsed, by her two sisters.

Deaths

This increase of young members was naturally accompanied by a decrease of older ones, and during these earlier years of the Eighteenth Century, the convent lost Dame Frances Symons, Dame Paula Hall, Dame Valeria Stanley, Dame Agnes Wakeman, and Dame Mary Fermor, all of whom were by that time advanced in years.

September 6.

The happy but too brief prelacy of Lady Scholastica Gerard was now at a close. Within three weeks of the profession of the two young dames mentioned above she departed this life on the 6th of September, 1711, after eight years and two months of superiority. She was only fifty-four years of age.

* See Appendix III., No. 4.

† The pedigree of the Blundells of Crosby mentions two sisters, Winifride and Frances (daughters of William and Mary Blundell) as having become nuns at Ghent. It is strange, however, that we nowhere find them both mentioned together in our own lists of the convent. The name, "Augustina Blundell" (the religious name of one of them), occurs repeatedly, and it is probable that she lived many years. In one list alone do we meet with the name, "Mary Frances Blundell," and in this list Dame Augustina's name is omitted, though from the apparent dates it ought to be there. Of course it is possible that it was omitted merely by an oversight (not an unnatural one, as the two names would stand together), and that Dame Frances died young (as far too many of our sisters did about that time), and hence did not find a place in many of the documents.

‡ See Appendix III., No. 5.

The following is a list of the religious dames who entered the chapter for the election of the eighth abbess of our monastery *:— 1711.

Dame Mary Knatchbull, Prioress and Dispenser.

Dame Mary Joseph Lawson

Dame Victoria Monson

Dame Teresa Mannock

} Jubilarians.

Dame Apollonia Porter, Portress and Sacristan.

Dame Maura Fitzwilliams, Consultress and Wardrobe

Dame Anna Westby, Mistress of Novices.

Dame Constantia Howard,† Thourier.

Dame Magdalene Lucy, Procuratrix and Chantress.

Dame Cecilia Tyldesley, Mistress of the Chapter.

Dame Winefride Lucy, Mistress of Ceremonies and Assistant Dispenser.

Dame Augustina Blundell.‡

Dame Mary Frances Blundell.

Dame Placida Tempest, Assistant Novice-mistress and 2nd Chantress.

Dame Scholastica Stanley, Aid to the School and Sacristy.

Dame Flavia Tempest, Aid to the Infirmary and Kitchen, and Time-keeper.

Dame Helen White.

Dame Gertrude Clifford.§

The three last named on this list are entered as aged nineteen, eighteen, and seventeen respectively. It is not often in these days that monasteries can boast such juvenile members.

The new abbess was Dame Mary Knatchbull, the third abbess whom her family gave to our house; she shared the excellent qualities of the other members, and was the last Knatchbull amongst us.

Not long after her benediction, she received to profession Dame Ignatia Clifford (sister to Dame Gertrude) and Dame Justina Blount, of the Blounts of Sodington, a well-known and ancient family of Worcestershire.

In the month of August, 1712, news was received of the death of Lady Mary Caryll, first abbess of Dunkerque. This remarkable woman had been professed in 1650, just before the death of Lady Mary Roper, for whom she ever preserved a singular veneration. In 1662, Lady Mary Knatchbull singled her out to head the colony to Dunkerque, over which new foundation she presided for some time in quality of prioress. When the time had come for choosing an abbess, she was elected to this dignity, and to her dying day she maintained in her community a spirit of fervour which was ever stimulated by her own example, while, according to our statutes, she kept her subjects ever tied in love to herself by the wonderful sweetness of her character. For a time her humility made

1712.

Death of Lady Mary Caryll at Dunkerque.

* It will be observed that the entries are not perfect as regards the offices held by individuals, since the deans are not specified, nor indeed the celleraire or infirmarian.

† In the original "Constance Howard de Norfolk."

‡ It is in this list that we have supplied Dame Augustina's name, which, as mentioned above, had been omitted.

§ The original of the above list is in French, and is to be found in the Episcopal Archives, Ghent.

1712.

her anxious to resign her superiority, and in this wish she was supported by her ecclesiastical superior, the Bishop of Ypres, who (probably on account of the comparative failure of the foundation at Ypres) was believed to have formed a project of removing the Lady Marina Beaumont from thence to Dunkerque.* But to this the community of the latter house would not consent, so the scheme had to be abandoned.

Lady Mary Caryll had been sixty-three years in religion, during forty-nine of which she was abbess, and had professed ninety choir nuns, forty-five of whom survived her. She was succeeded by Dame Benedicta Fleetwood.

Death of Dame
Mary Joseph
Lawson.

A very little later the death of our good old Dame Mary Joseph Lawson occurred. She was upwards of ninety years old, and formed a sort of connecting link between the early days of the monastery and the later ones. Having been professed in 1648 under Lady Mary Roper, she had known six abbesses, and lived to see Dame Magdalene Lucy (the second of that name) who was destined to become our tenth abbess and to live till the year 1761, considerably more than a century after Dame Mary Joseph's profession.

1712-17

Dame
Gertrude
Clifford.

We will mention here, by way of contrast, the early death of Dame Gertrude Clifford, who died about the year 1717 or 1718, being little more than twenty years old. These premature deaths were so frequent in our monastery as to verify the saying that the climate of Ghent was injurious to the English, numbers of whom were buried on St. Peter's Hill, before the great barrack.

1713.

On the 26th of April, 1713, another of our sisters died at Dunkerque; this was Dame Xaveria Pordage, one of those who had gone thither with Lady Mary Caryll at the foundation of that house, where she had remained ever since. She had kept her jubilee just two years when she died. The same year Dame Benedicta Wilson was professed at Ghent.

1715.

In 1715, Prince James Francis made his celebrated attempt at regaining the crown of his ancestors. The throne of England was then occupied by a prince who did not so much as speak the English language, and much sympathy was felt on the Continent, especially by the English Jacobites with the brave Chevalier de St. George. The unfortunate conclusion of this expedition was a great disappointment to them, for they saw in it a complete frustration of their hopes, at all events for the present. King George now began to treat the adherents of this party with great severity, and many of them went beyond the sea, to escape the annoyances to which they became subject. Among these was Sir Walter Kirkham Blount, of Sodington, who came to Ghent and settled there, in the neighbourhood of his niece, Dame Justina. This excellent gentleman appears to have had great piety; his literary works were all of a religious character, consisting chiefly of a translation of Dame Gertrude More's "Holy Ideot's Contemplations on Divine Love," the "Compleat Office of the Holy Week," containing some excellent translations of the Breviary Hymns, and the "Spirit of Christianity," published in 1686. The Holy Week Office had been begun by his father, Sir George Blount, but Sir Walter completed

Sir Walter
Kirkham
Blount.

* This circumstance was quaintly related by one of the Dunkerque community to a friend at Ypres many years later. The passage in her letter runs as follows: "Her humility was such as to petition the Bishop's leave to resign her Crosier, but the community absolutely refus'd his Lordship's consent, who had a mind to oblige his friend the Lady Marina by making her Abbess, and as he went out of the monastery his Lordsh^p. said 'if wt I intend be not to the greater glory of God, I beseech his divine Majesty to prevent it by punishing of me,' to which sentence one Religious then present answer'd, 'I beseech God it may be so.'" The date of this letter is probably about 1745.

it, dedicated it to his mother, Mary, daughter of Sir Richard Kirkham, of Blagden, and published it in 1670.* Two copies of this first edition are still in our possession.

1715.

It was about this time that the Rev. Richard Daniel became chaplain and confessor to our community.† The Rev. Francis Green was still living, but, having attained a great age, had become too infirm to discharge his duties.

The next profession at Ghent (in 1716) was that of Dame Ruperta Browne, the daughter of Nicholas, second Viscount Kenmare. She had been educated in her early years at Hammersmith, where Mrs. Mary Ward's "English Ladies" still kept a school; at the age of thirteen she came to us at Ghent, and was distinguished amongst our children for her obedience and humility, never looking for any privilege on account of the large pension paid for her by her father. A retreat made in the school determined this pious girl to enter the novitiate at the age of sixteen, and our community had reason to rejoice at the acquisition of a good and fervent member. In a true spirit of generosity Dame Ruperta defrayed, from means placed by her father at her disposal, the expense of a new grate and the "Good Angels' House" for the accommodation of guests, and never seemed to think she had done enough for the community. The custom of our monastery at that time allowed (in accordance with a practice very common in France and Flanders) that individuals should have the disposal of a small annuity (seldom exceeding £5 in value) if given by their friends in addition to the usual portion,‡ and Dame Ruperta is especially commemorated for the generosity and public spirit which she showed in the use of this money.

1716.

Dame Ruperta Browne.

On the 17th of June, 1717, Sir Walter Kirkham Blount died, and was buried in our church, where an epitaph was put up to his memory.§ He left some of his books to our monastery, and notwithstanding the loss of the best part of our library, we still have several bearing his name, the name of Dame Justina Blount being sometimes added.

1717.

On the 25th of July, 1717, the venerable Dame Margaret Markham died at Pontoise.¶ We have already seen how she had formed one of the party who first founded that monastery at Boulogne sixty-five years before: in 1687, she had headed the Pontoise colony to Dublin, where she had solemnised her jubilee in presence of King James II.; in 1700, she was sent on a third mission, to re-establish the community at Ypres, where she passed about two years, returning afterwards to her own monastery at Pontoise to resume her former useful and edifying life. She lived to a ripe old age, and then died piously, after having served seven abbesses at Pontoise and three at Ghent, and held the office of prioress in all twenty-four years. ||

July 25.

That same year saw the profession of Dame Mary Anne Gerard, and the following (1718) those of Dames Frances Fernor, Mary Bernard Caryll and Josepha Maire. The

* See Gillow's Biographical Dictionary, Vol. I., p. 242.

† We have not been able to ascertain the precise date of the Rev. Richard Daniel's arrival at Ghent. In 1712 he appears to have become chaplain to the Carmelite nuns at Antwerp; but we find him already at Ghent in 1716, and he remained there till 1728, when he was succeeded by the Rev. James Whetenhall.

‡ These private pensions were abolished in our community about the year 1811, by the advice of Bishop Milner.

§ See Appendix III., No. 6.

|| There is a little discrepancy in the MSS. about Dame Margaret Markham's age. One of the Pontoise papers (preserved at Teignmouth) makes it 100, and another 105; but according to our Ghent papers (kept in the Episcopal palace there) she was professed in 1639, at the age of 17, and this would make her only 95 at her death, which is probably the true account.

Fermors, Tempests, and Maires were related to each other, as may be observed in the Tempest pedigree.*

On the 11th of April, 1718, the community lost a friend and benefactor in the person of Mrs. Mary Anne Howard. This lady was the widow of Robert Howard, Esq., of Hoar Cross, in Staffordshire,† who is believed to have been descended from the Dukes of Norfolk. She was well known among English Catholics for her piety and charity, and did much for religion in Staffordshire. Our old apothecary's book is a proof that her charity extended to the bodies as well as the souls of her friends, for it is replete with prescriptions given to us by her. She died at Ghent, aged forty-one, and was buried in our church, where her daughter had an epitaph carved to her memory.‡

During the year 1718, the Rev. Hugh Tootell, better known by his "nom de plume" of Charles Dodd, collecting materials for his Church History of England, applied to the Lady Mary Knatchbull for some information about the foundation of our monastery, of which he intended making a notice. She accordingly put together some interesting notes on the subject, together with a copy of Dame Aloysia German's narrative of the apparition of John Sherman's ghost, which the reader has seen in the Appendix. This was sent to the English College at Douay, where the Rev. Mr. Tootell was then residing, accompanied by the following letter:—

"Sir,

"I am two sensible of ye honour to do our Community in giving us a place in y^r Cronicles not to acknowledg the favor as soon as I cou'd gett these notes ready. As Heaven never intended womens weak heads for such undertakeings I doubt not butt you'l have ye goodness to excuse ye grose faults in ye manner of performance, tho' you may depend on ye truth of w^t is writt, for I have taken care to make a diligent searche into all y^t is authentike; there are severall other little things y^t mite edifye concerning ye ways y^t God was pleased to use in calling some to Religion wth I omitt not to give y^r Patience too great a tryall, if you judg an account of them may prove to ye purpose I shall faithfully comply with any orders you shall give and Glory in styling myself with due respect.

"Sir

"your most humble serv^t

"MARY KNATCHBULL, Ab: un.

"Gant ye 10th of 9^{ber}

"1718

"permitt me to assure Mr. President and Sir Edward Blount of my most humble respects. D^m. Justina presents you hers."

The following postscript is on the other page:—

"You'l much oblige me in inserting these letters from ye Kings. Y^r R^{nee} may prove a founder to us in exposing their Majestys promises to my great Aunt and Predicessour in hopes yong Gemy§ may make y^m good, from whom I have had ye honour of sone

* See Appendix II., No. 9.

† This estate afterwards passed to the Talbot family.

‡ See Appendix III., No. 7.

§ Prince James Francis, son of King James II.

letters y^t were kind also. Another remark you'l do us a justice in that this family found it much concerned union to admitt only of such as were of Ancient familys. We have ever bin most remarkable for peace and united Chapters in all our Elections either of Superiours or trienniall employments. I must say y^t I have known such solide vertue practised in this house as I shoud not be surprised if some of ye deceased dead asshes shoud work Miracles. I can say a great deale of ye liveing if it were proper, and I give God thanks our temporall concerns are in a better state than ever, all incumbrances being att an end."

This letter is addressed :

"Monsieur

Monsieur Heskett au Seminaire

Des Prestres Angloix

A Doway."*

In the month of April, 1720, our sisters buried another friend in their church. This was a niece of the late Dame Francisca, Lady Smythe† (*née* Grace Carington), wife of Sir Richard Smythe, of Eshe Hall, co. Durham, and Acton Burnell, co. Salop. Tired of the world, this lady had retired to the seclusion of our monastery, where she resided as an honoured guest, though her husband still lived. Here she was purified by a long and protracted illness, which at last carried her off. She was buried near the communion rails, where a touching epitaph marks the spot.‡ We still have a souvenir of this good lady in the silver altar-bell of foreign workmanship which is used as often as Holy Communion is taken to the sick. It bears engraved on it the arms of Smythe and Carington-Smith impaled together.

1718.

1720.

The next professions in our convent were those of Dame Gertrude Hastings and Dame Xaveria Severn§ in 1723, and of Dame Ildefonsa Clifford in 1724. The latter was the youngest sister of Dames Gertrude and Ignatia Clifford. An interesting list of the community was drawn up in the month of February, 1725, to serve as a reference for the Bishop of Ghent at a visitation of the monastery. This is the first list (so far as we know) drawn up in English, and is so complete that we have given it in full in the Appendix, as being of some interest.¶

1723.

1725.

In the year 1728 our monastery had another change of chaplain, and this time the new priest was one who proved to be another Father Vincent in his faithful friendship.

1728.

The Rev. James Whetenhall was born in 1702, of a good family, of East Peckham, in Kent. He studied at Douay College, and in 1722 was sent by Bishop Gifford to Rome, where he was ordained priest, on the 1st of December, 1726. It was on the 2nd of May, 1728, that he left Rome for Ghent, where he had been appointed confessor and chaplain

Father
Whetenhall.

* The original of this letter is in the possession of the Dean and Chapter, from which the above is copied. The "notes" accompanying it consist of a very brief sketch of the foundation at Ghent, together with some particulars about the pecuniary affairs, the first seven abbesses, and the confessors of the community, all of which particulars find their place in our history. The Rev. Hugh Tootell, who wrote under the name of Dodd, seems to have commonly passed under that of Hesketh during his life, his mother having been connected with this family.

† See Appendix II., Pedigree 7.

‡ See Appendix III., Epitaph 8.

§ The bad writing prevalent in some of the old MSS. makes it impossible to say with certainty how this name should be written. In some it appears to be Severn or Senern, and in others Gevern.

¶ See Appendix I., No. 16.

to our community. His family appears to have been singularly blessed by God. His brother, Rev. Henry Whetenhall, was a Jesuit, their sister Catherine (Dame Maura) was professed a nun at Brussels in 1716, where she subsequently became abbess; and another relative—either sister or aunt—was professed at Pontoise, as Dame Placida in 1718. A third brother was a married man, but having lost his wife he retired to Brussels where he placed his only daughter at school with our sisters there, and settled in the out-quarters of the monastery himself. Father Whetenhall was devoted to the interests of our community, for whose benefit he wrote a set of solid meditations on the religious vows, and translated or transcribed the Devotion of the Ten Tuesdays in honour of our Holy Father St. Benedict, originated by a devout Italian nun of our Order; for the performance of which devotion he obtained of the Bishop of Ghent, M. John Baptist de Smedt, an indulgence of forty days, by a grant dated April 15th, 1737. Both the manuscripts we have mentioned still exist in our library.

In the course of a few years (between 1726 and 1730) the professions were received of Dame Mary Scholastica Haggerston (so called in distinction to Dame Scholastica Stanley), and Dame Mary Michael Tyldesley. The latter had given great proof of her constancy to her vocation, for whereas she had long been wishing to give herself to God, the circumstances of her family obliged her to defer the fulfilment of her wish for some years. It is well known how much the Tyldesley family had to suffer in fines and penalties for their religion and loyalty to the exiled Stuarts, and our monastery not being sufficiently provided for to take subjects without portions, it was some time before she was able to present herself to the novitiate, but her patience was at last rewarded.

Dame Maura Fitzwilliam, Dame Anna Westby, and Dame Constantia Howard passed away during the few years of which we are now speaking.

About the year 1730,* Lady Mary Knatchbull died, and in due time the chapter met to elect her successor. It seemed at first doubtful who this successor would be. The convent numbered at this time several competent members, and the votes were divided between Dame Cecilia Tyldesley and the two Lucys. At last, however, they were centred on Dame Cecilia, a religious of some three-and-twenty years' standing, who had already filled some of the most important offices in the house.

Among the first professions received by the new abbess were those of Dame Romana Alexander and Dame Teresa Martins. In the latter, the convent made an exception to the general rule of admitting only British subjects. Dame Teresa Martins was Flemish, but being well known in our monastery, where she had been brought up, no difficulty was made about her admittance, though her own friends were very much opposed to it. It proved to be rather an advantage to the community to have a member who understood the language and customs of the country, and who was so willing to make herself useful in dealing with externs as this good Dame. It seems very probable that we obtained

* The date of Lady Mary Knatchbull's death is a little uncertain. A MS. in our possession, drawn up in 1815 (when several of the Ghent nuns were living) fixes it at 1727. But the "Procès Verbal" of the election of her successor (kept in the Episcopal Archives) is unmistakably dated July 12th, 1730 (See Appendix I., No. 17), and it seems almost impossible that an interval of three years should have been permitted to elapse between the two events. Some light may, however, be thrown upon the matter by the fact that the Bishop of Ghent (M. Van der Noot) had reached so advanced an age as to be unequal to attending to business. He died on the 3rd of February, 1730, at the age of 92, and the election finally took place under the auspices of the Diocesan Chapter.

through her the beautiful set of Flemish damask linen, of which we still have several pieces in good preservation, that are used in the refectory every year on Maundy Thursday. It is said to have formed the dowry of a nun whose father was a merchant of Antwerp, and the date, 1722, woven into some of the pieces, together with the fact that Dame Teresa Martins was the only Flemish member we know of who entered amongst us about that time, points to this conclusion.

1728-30.

The professions of Dame Mary Baptist Phillips and Dame Agnes Gillibrand followed soon after. The former was destined to become a prominent member of the community and an abbess. On the occasion of her profession, her brother, the Rev. Thomas Phillips,* S.J., wrote a poem, which may be read with interest as a specimen of the poetical style of the day.† It proves that the author had considerable poetical talent.

1731.

Dame Placida and Dame Flavia Tempest soon after had the satisfaction of witnessing the profession of their niece, Dame Mary Stanislaus, and it is said that she was followed to religion also by her sister, Anne.‡ Mary, the third sister, was professed a few years later as Dame Mary Anselm.

Lady Cecilia Tyldesley died in 1736, aged forty-eight. Her successor was Dame Magdalene Lucy, the second abbess of that name.

1736.

Death of Lady Cecilia.

The years passed away without any very stirring events, and the quiet life of our sisters in their peaceful abode on the banks of the Scheldt was diversified chiefly by the usual little community interests of clothings, professions and jubilees. Among the members admitted to profession during the early years of Lady Magdalene Lucy's prelatute, we may name Dame Clare Throckmorton, Dame Anne Joseph Fermor, Dame Catherine Sheldon, Dame Maura Grosvenor, and Dame Aloysia Hesketh.

1736-40.

Dame Anne Joseph was the niece of Dame Frances Fermor; her family was a singularly religious one. Two of her aunts \$—sisters of Dame Frances—were at Dunkerque, where one of them (also called Frances in religion) became abbess in 1748. Two of her sisters were Augustinian nuns in Paris, and later on she had two nieces Benedictines in Perugia.

The Fermors and Sheldons.

Dame Catharine Sheldon, too, belonged to a family which has numbered quite a multitude of religious. Her sisters Mary and Barbara, and her aunt Catherine were nuns in

* The Rev. Thomas Phillips was born at Ickford, co. Bucks, July 5th, 1708, of an ancient family, his father being a convert from protestantism. He studied at St. Omer and entered the Society of Jesus on the 7th September, 1726. A few years later he gave up all his property to the college at Liège, but in 1733 he grew dissatisfied and left the Society. Going to Rome, he obtained preferment through Prince Charles Edward Stuart, but returned to England to serve on the mission, which he did while stationed as chaplain successively to George Earl of Shrewsbury, Sir Richard Acton and Mr. Berkeley of Spetchley. At last he returned to Liège, and earnestly petitioned for re-admission into the Society. This was granted, and he was re-admitted on the 16th of June, 1768. He died in July, 1774 (see Foley's Records). Father Phillips was the author of the well-known *Life of Cardinal Pole* (Oxford, 1767).

† See Appendix I., No. 18.

‡ The family pedigree of the Tempests of Broughton gives three sisters (nieces to Dames Placida and Flavia) as having been nuns at Ghent, namely, Elizabeth, Anne, and Mary. In 1733, in a list drawn up for a Canonical Visitation of the monastery (the original of which was until lately in the Episcopal Archives at Ghent), Dames Stanislaus and Anselm Tempest (written "Stanislaa" and "Anselma") are entered as novices; apparently these would be Elizabeth and Anne. It is known that Mary took the name Anselma, but as in 1733 she could only have been nine years old, this entry could hardly be meant for her. As Anne Tempest is said in the family pedigree to have died in 1738, Mary (who could not have been professed before 1740) might have taken her sister's name. It is true that whereas we frequently find the name "D. Stanislaus Tempest" in the community lists of that period, we nowhere find an entry answering to Anne; but the dates of these lists are obscure, and her early death might account for the omission. If she died at Ghent in 1738, she must have been twenty-two years old, and she could not have been still at school at that age.

§ See Appendix II., No. 10

our house at Dunkerque, and she had three cousins (Catharine, Mary, and Elisabeth Sheldon) at Cambray. Her brother Edward was a priest, her uncles Henry and Ralph, Jesuits, and her cousin, Dame Mary Anne Scrope, was another of the Dunkerque community. Father Henry Sheldon was a kind friend to our convent, for which he obtained the grant from Pope Benedict XIV. (dated May 11th, 1754) to say the Votive Office of our Holy Father St. Benedict, on any day in the week if the Tuesday were hindered, a custom which at that time was not universal in the Order.

Dame Maura Grosvenor was the child of a mixed marriage, and, although, together with her sister, she had been brought up a Catholic in childhood by her mother, both had afterwards "conformed," as the term was, to Anglicanism, the creed of their father. Happily, however, some of their Catholic relations were at last able to persuade him to send them to Ghent to complete their education, with permission to return to the faith if they pleased. This they did with all their hearts, and both soon after entered the novitiate. But their constitutions were very weakly, and before long the younger (Sister Bernard) was obliged to give up the religious life and return to England. Dame Maura, however, bravely persevered and was professed, though after about twelve years of religious life she succumbed to her infirmities and died calmly and happily. It is recorded of this good religious that she was "notedly cautious and prudent in her words, rarely interfering in the concerns of others, especially where charity might be weakened or offended." The value of these qualities in a religious community will be testified to by every experienced member.

Dame Aloysia Hesketh belonged to that branch of the Hesketh family which was descended from the Heskeths of Aughton, and owned the manor of The Maynes. By their connexion with the Brockholes family* they afterwards became possessed of the Claughton estates also, but towards the end of the eighteenth century by the extinction of the Hesketh family, both properties passed to Mr. William Fitzherbert, brother-in-law to Dame Aloysia's brother Joseph, by whose descendants (under the name of Fitzherbert-Brockholes) the family is now represented. There was a custom in our monastery at Ghent of having life-size portraits taken of the abbesses and some of the other members. These interesting paintings were unfortunately left behind and lost at the escape from Ghent in 1794, with the single exception of the fine portrait of Dame Aloysia Hesketh, which, owing to the solicitude of her sister (who is said to have cut it from its frame and rolled up the canvas under her cloak) was brought to England in safety; it now hangs in our refectory. This sister, Dame Frances, entered at Ghent fifteen or sixteen years later than Dame Aloysia. We shall hear more of her later on.

Our community continued to be afflicted from time to time with the premature deaths of its members. Dame Scholastica Haggerston and Dame Mary Bernard Caryll died young, and in 1743 Dame Anne Joseph Fermor was carried off by a brief and sharp attack of illness, for which she suffered with heroic courage some of the severe and painful remedies in use at that time, which made the Lady Abbess say that "she seemed to have less dread of feeling the lance than we of seeing its cruel effects." This young nun appears to have been characterised by a remarkable sweetness and gentleness

* See Appendix II., No. 11.



DAME ALOYSIA HESKETH.

of disposition, which endeared her greatly to her religious sisters, and in the chapter held, according to custom, on the thirtieth day after her burial, Lady Magdalen Lucy alluded in touching terms to the feelings which her sudden death had caused amongst them, reminding her hearers how our Lord's tears at the death of Lazarus were, as it were, a sanctification of their own grief.

1740-3.

The continued poverty of our convent may have had something to do with these early deaths, as it was thought that the food was often inferior and insufficient, and this contributed to weaken constitutions which were already delicate. As an instance of this we may mention a letter addressed by the Lady Abbess to the Bishop of Ghent in 1753, the original of which may still be seen in the Episcopal Archives. In this letter a request is made for permission to keep the feasts of the saints inserted in the proper calendar of the cathedral, and the principal reason alleged for the petition is that the number of ferias (on which according to our statutes the little offices had to be said) might be reduced, as the community was small and numbered many aged and infirm members who could not stand so much fatigue. The second part of the letter is amusing enough. It would seem that Father Whetenhall had requested that at the Conventual Mass the Credo should be sung entirely, and not merely the alternate verses diversified with the organ, as our nuns, in common with the members of other religious houses in the town, had done up to that time.* The Lady Abbess maintained that the religious had not strength for so much chanting as this would involve, and that she could not provide them with sufficient food to enable them to do so! But however we may be inclined to smile at the timidity of our predecessors in the use of their voices, there can be no doubt whatever that their poverty was very real, and that time brought no remedy. The position of English Catholics and Royalists was not likely to be bettered by the disastrous campaign of Prince Charles Stuart in 1745 (though they were wise enough to take but little part in it), and the laws introduced by William III, forbidding them to inherit or purchase property, still kept them in a very depressed state.

1743-53.

Poverty.

The fidelity of our convent to the exiled Stuarts, as long as one of them survived, was very touching. At the chapters held on the eves of feasts,† the Lady Abbess never failed to name, as one of the intentions for prayer, "the restoration of our King," or "of the Royal Family," and the friendly letters which passed between her and Cardinal Henry, of York, on the death of his brother (which we shall mention further on in its due place), show that the feeling was mutual.

Our sisters continued to adhere somewhat rigidly to their rule of admitting only British subjects, the better to maintain the character and tone of an English community. As far as we know there were never more than four non-English members,‡ unless,

* The practice of allowing the organ to supply for the singing in certain parts of the Mass is permitted by the rubrics, but for obvious reasons this is explicitly forbidden with regard to the Credo. (See "*Cæremoniale Episcoporum*," Lib. I., cap. 28.)

† The original notes for some of these chapters are still in our possession and are of some interest. Their style and orthography is an example of the literary decadence which seems to have prevailed among the English Catholics at this period; but at the same time it must be acknowledged that they are not all equal. Those of Lady Baptist Phillips are decidedly superior to those of either her predecessor or her successor. On the other hand, it must be said that the "Dead-Chapters," by Lady Magdalene Lucy, of which we have seven or eight, are very good. Still, the contrast between this period and a hundred years previous, is rather striking. The official documents of the latter are in excellent Latin, those of the former in very bad French.

‡ Dame Placida Lopez, Dame Teresa Martins, Sister Martina Decken, and Sister Teresa Musché. The American was Dame Xaveria Boone.

1740-3.

Flemish
pensioners.

indeed, we except also one American. They made no difficulty, however, about receiving Flemish children for education, and their school was much sought after by the natives, who placed their daughters there in some numbers, for the advantage of an English education.

Our church continued to be a frequent burial place for English residents in Ghent. Francis Tasburgh, Esq., of Bodney, and John Messenger, Esq., of Fountains Abbey, were buried there in 1747 and 1749.*

1744.

Another interesting incident was the reception of a rescript from the Father President of the Anglo-Benedictines, Dom Cuthbert Farnworth, granting to our convent the General Absolution of the Order, on the first Monday in Lent, and at the hour of death, to be imparted by a monk of our Order, or at least by a priest in the Benedictine scapular. This rescript is dated from St. Edmund's Priory, in Paris, the 13th February, 1744, and is countersigned by the Bishop of Ghent.

1755

Dame Ignatia Clifford had died in May, 1740; her sister, Dame Ildefonsa, survived her some years. In the month of September, 1755, Dame Teresa Martins and Dame Ruperta Browne died within three weeks of each other. The former, although not old, had been infirm and suffering for some time, and yet had continued to give edification to all by her regular attendance at the choir and other observances, punctually filling the hebdomadary duties as often as, or even oftener than others in the community. Her faithful life was rewarded by a calm and happy death. Dame Ruperta Browne had also been breaking in health for some time, and it had been observed that her visits to the Blessed Sacrament had been more frequent, and her exercises of piety more fervent of late; her life, too, seemed more silent and recollected, as though Almighty God were gently preparing her for the end by giving her secret converse with himself. All this was reflected upon with much consolation by her sisters after her death, which occurred quite suddenly when no one was at hand to assist her.

1756.

The same year, Lady Magdalen Lucy kept her golden jubilee, being the second of our Abbesses who was thus privileged. Not long after, she received the professions of Dames Magdalen Arden, Frances Hesketh, and Placida Jones. The Ardens belonged to a good Worcestershire family, while Dame Placida was the daughter of Richard Jones, Esq., of Dingheston, in Monmouthshire. Dame Frances Hesketh was Dame Aloysia's junior sister. Other members of old Catholic families continued to be received, among whom we may mention Dames Scholastica Clavering, Mary Bernard Pullen, and Benedicta Ferrers. The latter belonged to the well-known Ferrers family of Baddesley Clinton, in Warwickshire. A series of quaint old drawings, till recently in the possession of members of her family, and probably executed by a member of the community, represented her occupied in the various crafts, in which she appears to have been an adept. In her capacity of Celleraire she is first seen making a pudding, then gathering fruit in the garden, glazing a window, and even shoeing a horse!†

* See Appendix III., Nos. 11 and 12.

† These little traits remind us of more recent times, when at Caverswall Castle, Dame Bernard Wareing used to be seen not only chaining beads (a common accomplishment), but doing various kinds of carpenter's work, and fishing in the moat for the benefit of the kitchen; and show that the spirit of making oneself generally useful to the community began in early times, and still flourishes amongst us. A set of comic verses, which accompanied the sketches to which we have alluded, show too that the wholesome and innocent mirth which often characterises our recreation days had its commencement amongst our predecessors in the old home at Ghent. We regret not being able to offer these verses to the reader, but they were accidentally destroyed, together with the drawings, a few years ago.

In 1759 departed this life Dame Mary Michael Tyldesley, an active and laborious member, who had held the arduous posts of prioress, celleraire, and mistress of the school. During the last two years that she had been declining in health, she had avoided as much as possible the dispensations and attentions offered her by the infirmarian, ever fearful of being useless or a burthen to others; she was blessed with a very happy death. Dame Josepha Maire followed her to the grave shortly after.

1759.

In 1761 departed this life Lady Magdalen Lucy, our tenth abbess, after twenty-five years of government, during which, like most of her predecessors, she had had much anxiety to contend with on the score of poverty. In 1718 Lady Mary Knatchbull had been able to inform Rev. Mr. Tootell that the financial affairs of the monastery were in a better state than ever, but this condition of things did not last long, and during the remainder of the century the temporals were gradually on the decline, until the spread of the French Revolution brought matters to a crisis.

1761.

Death of Lady
Magdalen
Lucy.

Lady Magdalen Lucy was succeeded by Dame Mary Baptist Phillips, a nun who was specially noted for her sweetness of character and her zeal and exactitude in all the exercises of the religious life. She had been educated in the convent, and had passed direct from the school to the novitiate at the age of sixteen, so that she was as ignorant of the world as she was well versed in the science of religion. She was eminently qualified to hold the first place, for she fulfilled to the letter our Holy Father's precept of "showing forth all virtue and sanctity more by deeds than by words," and thus governing her disciples with a "two-fold doctrine." (S. Reg., cap. 2.)

Lady Baptist
Phillips,
eleventh
Abbess.

It was not long after this time that the persecution of the Jesuits in France first broke out, which very soon affected the English colonies in French Flanders. The spirit of Jansenism and Gallicanism, which had been steadily growing for more than a century, had long viewed with a jealous eye the Society of Jesus and its influence in the Church, and at last its members were banished from the French dominions. The English Jesuits were consequently compelled to quit St. Omer, their principal house, and Watten, both of which were in territories subject to France. The fathers from St. Omer went to Bruges, where they remained for twelve years, and the English Novitiate was removed from Watten to the college at Ghent, formerly called "The Professed House." It was thus that the college of St. Omer fell into the hands of the English secular clergy, to whom the French Government made it over when they expelled the Jesuits. About four years later the celebrated Alban Butler was appointed president of this house, to which his learning and virtues gave an additional renown, and where he ended his days devoutly in 1773.

Persecution
of the
Jesuits.

1764.

St. Omer
college.

In the year 1769 we find the first trace of the devotion to the Sacred Heart in our monastery. Pope Clement XIII., in a rescript dated January the 29th, granted an indulgence of 100 days for the veneration of a statue of the Sacred Heart there. The feast was not kept very generally at that time, and it was not observed by our sisters until after their arrival in England,* but it is pleasing to know that the devotion began in the old house at Ghent. May God grant that it should subsist as long as the monastery itself.

1769.

Devotion to
the Sacred
Heart.

* Bishop Walsh first obtained permission for the feast to be kept by our convent at Caverswall Castle, from Pope Gregory XVI. in the year 1833, at the request of Lady Teresa Shuttleworth.

1763-75.
Professions
and deaths.

Several members of interest were received by Lady Baptist Phillips. Dame Teresa Hodgson was professed in 1763, and a few years later one whose family rendered her very dear to us, since it was that of our second Abbess. Dame Eugenia Pulton, the younger, pronounced her vows on the 13th of July, 1768. She has left us a standing memorial of herself in the fine old clock, with which she provided the monastery, which still stands above the stairs in our present house at Oulton, keeping the time as steadily as it did 120 years ago. On the dial-plate may be read the words: "When this you see pray for me: Teresia Eugenia Poulton." Dame Xaveria Boone, an American, was her fellow novice, and was professed the following year. In April, that same year (1769), Dame Anselm Tempest died, while holding the office of Prioress, and in July, Dame Benedicta Willson followed her. Their names were soon taken again by Dame Anselm's niece, Mary Tempest, and Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld, who were professed together with Dame Stanislaus White, on the 10th of May, 1775. Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld was a great acquisition to the community, for she was a very clever person, and while still young was appointed Mistress of the pensioners. The converse sisters, too, were having frequent gains and losses in numbers during this period. Sister Benedicta Williams died in 1768, and a little later Sisters Winefride Hurst, Xaveria Matthews, Anne Tucker, and Aloysia Segers, while the professions were received of Sister Benedicta Tasker (1770), and Sister Magdalen Edmonds (1778).

1773.
Suppressed
holidays.

We will here mention, as a little episode which is not devoid of its interest, a letter written by the Lady Abbess to the Bishop of Ghent,* in February, 1773, in which she begs permission to continue the custom of having a second Mass celebrated and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament given on the feasts which we now call days of devotion, but which up to that time had been holidays of obligation. The precept of hearing Mass on them had just been taken off by the Pope, but there seemed no reason why a religious community should not continue these pious customs, and the leave to do so was accordingly granted. Another communication with the Bishop, under nearly the same date, received an answer permitting the Lady Abbess, the confessor, three choir nuns, and a few of the converse sisters to avail themselves of the Lenten Indult for as long a time as the physician should judge desirable, and allowing the pensioners to do so during the whole of Lent. This circumstance shows us that on the continent at that time, dispensations from the observance of Lent were sought from no less an authority than that of the bishop, and also that the Indult given for Lent (a much more limited one than that which we now receive) was not considered available within the inclosure of a monastery, even for secular pupils, without special permission.

March 2.
Death of
Father
Whetenhall.

On the 2nd of March, 1773, our community lost their good and kind friend, Father Whetenhall. For upwards of forty years—in fact the whole of his priestly life—he had lived at Ghent; and when, a few years before, his health was failing, he had made a contract duly signed† by which he left all his effects—consisting chiefly, as he says, of books, linen, and a little plate—to the community, who, on their side, promised to take every care of him for the rest of his life.‡

* See Appendix I., No. 19.

† See Appendix I., No 20.

‡ We still have many of these books, which are mostly valuable French works, and in which the family book-plate, with crest and arms of Whetenhall, may be seen together with his name; but the great bulk of them, with the best part of our own library, was left behind in our forsaken monastery in 1794 and irrevocably lost.

It was in the month of July of the year 1773 that the Bull for the suppression of the Society of Jesus was published by Pope Clement XIV. The effects of this measure were much felt by many Catholics, amongst whom we may include our sisters at Ghent, who thereby lost the neighbourhood of a set of priests who had always been kind and friendly in their services to them. The English Jesuits shut up their house at Ghent, and from that time forward the only place where they could live in community was their college at Liège, the name of which they changed to "English Academy," and, by enlarging the plan of studies and devoting themselves mainly to education, they managed to continue on nearly the same footing as formerly for about twenty years.

1773.

Suppression
of the
Jesuits.

In the year 1778 a measure of relief was passed for the Catholics of England, who for nearly eighty years had been suffering from the most oppressive laws, though no longer subject to capital punishment for their religion. True, the relief was not very extensive, but, such as it was, it was hailed with delight and gratitude. Catholics were now to be allowed to purchase or inherit landed property, while the reward of £100 was no longer to be offered to the informer who should convict a Bishop or Priest of saying mass. The faithful, however, were still subject to penalties if they attempted to teach, or were apprehended hearing mass; but any kind of relief was welcome, especially as being a probable prelude to more, and the English Catholics residing abroad, no less than their friends at home, might have felt this to be really the beginning of better times, but the fearful riots which followed (called from their leader the Gordon Riots) showed what a bitter anti-catholic spirit still existed in their poor country. Our sisters heard with horror of the proceedings of the mob which assembled in Edinburgh when an attempt was made to introduce into Scotland the mitigation of the penal laws which had just been passed in England; and those of the still more violent mob in London a little later, the terrors of which were such as had not been heard of for many years; and they must have thought indeed that the time was far off when they, or any religious women, could again live in England.

1778.

Catholic Relief
Bill in
England.

1780.

The next few years brought a great many deaths in the community. In January, 1779, Dame Scholastica Clavering died; in September, Dame Mary Joseph (or Anne Joseph) Bowyer, while the March and July of the same year witnessed the happy departure of Sister Frances Hendley and Sister Mary Joseph Coppings. The same year Dame Baptist Farrar, a middle-aged Lancashire lady, was professed, and the following year, Dame Mary Joseph Molyneux.

Deaths and
professions.

In January, 1781, Dame Clementina Arden and Dame Eugenia Pulton died within three days of each other. The former was an elderly person, but the latter was young, and, humanly speaking, seemed to have many years before her. That same year witnessed the golden jubilee of the Lady Abbess; but in this case (as indeed it often happens) it was but a presage of the end, for that very autumn saw her prostrate with the long and painful illness which at last took her from her devoted children on the 9th of November, the anniversary of our second abbess, Lady Eugenia Pulton, and of our first choir religious, Dame Elizabeth Bradbury.

1781.

November 9.

Lady Baptist Phillips was the last Abbess whom our community buried at Ghent, and her virtues were such that we might almost say they could bear a comparison with those

Death of
Lady Baptist
Phillips.

1781.

of the first, Lady Lucy Knatchbull. In the Mortuary Notice which was sent out to the convents and other friends, an abridged account of her career was printed, which is so interesting and edifying that we do not hesitate to give here an English translation of it. The original is in Latin.

“JESUS. MARY. BENEDICT.

“In the year of Our Lord 1781, on the 9th day of November, at Ghent, in the Abbey of the English Nuns of the Order of the Holy Father Benedict, dedicated to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, fortified with all the rites of our Holy Mother the Church,

“THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND REVEREND LADY,

“LADY MARY BAPTIST PHILLIPS, ABBESS,

“after enduring with the greatest patience the bitter sufferings of a protracted sickness, with peaceful and pious resignation gave back her soul to its Creator, amidst the prayers and tears of her beloved children in Christ, who tenderly bewail the loss of a Mother dear to them above all, and of a Superior most deserving of their veneration, in the 69th year of her age, the 51st of her religious profession, and 20th of her Abbatial Dignity. From her tender years she possessed a wonderful innocence of manners, and sweetness of disposition, and a heart prepared for every virtuous impression. As she had been taught among the chosen spouses of Christ to bear from her youth the sweet yoke of her Redeemer, she made in a short time such rapid advances in the practice of every virtue that she herself began to thirst with vehement longing after the chaste Nuptials of the Immaculate Lamb, preferring for love of Him to forego the experience of this world's perishable enjoyments rather than to renounce after tasting them. Her holy purpose being accomplished, after undergoing with scrupulous exactitude the rigorous trial of her novitiate, and being admitted by the suffrage of all to the solemn profession of her religious vows, it was astonishing with what ardour of soul she ascended by the steps of humility, obedience, poverty, chastity, observance of the rule, prayer, and every other virtue, to the summit of religious perfection. Indeed so much did she excel in virtue that she was deemed worthy to be elected Abbess of the monastery. In this high dignity she was slow to exercise the authority of her superior station, and stimulate her spiritual children by admonitions or reproof, to the practice of virtue and attainment of religious perfection; but she loved rather to lead them by her own example, which was more powerful than any words. Of her it was particularly observable (not to speak of many other excellent qualities) that when engaged in mental prayer, or in chanting the praises of God in the choir with the community, her recollection and absorption in God were so visible that she seemed to be taking part in a heavenly rather than an earthly choir. Nor did the Divine Spirit appear to shed His sweet influence less abundantly over her soul when the duties of her office required her attention to various affairs, all tending to the divine pleasure, and promoting the glory of God in herself and her children. Not that she was insensible to the heavy responsibility of her charge, for she keenly felt her burthen, and the one thing that made her grieve over it was the fear lest some fault of hers or some involuntary error in her government might have affected or should hereafter affect the welfare of the convent intrusted to her care. This she frequently expressed to her spiritual director, adding that for the salvation or progress in virtue of any of the

souls intrusted to her, she would willingly sacrifice her reputation or even shed her blood. Adorned with these virtues and already ripe for Heaven, though worthy of a longer life as her children fondly hoped, Christ the heavenly Bridegroom tried his beloved spouse in the crucible of tribulation, as gold is tried in the furnace, and—as we hope—cleansed her from every, even the slightest, stain of imperfection, and vouchsafed to call her to His divine embraces on the day, month, and year aforesaid. Lest, however, some earthly stain, adhering to the soul and yet unexpiated, may delay her possession of eternal bliss, we earnestly commend her to your sacrifices and prayers.

“Requiescat in pace. Amen.”



BOOK THE FOURTH.

LAST DAYS AT GHENT AND REMOVAL TO ENGLAND.

A.D. 1781 to 1811.

1781.

The next period of our annals is a very momentous one, including as it does an epoch in history which brought a new state of things to almost the whole of Europe, and affected very specially the Catholics in England, who after the lapse of two centuries, saw once more in their midst colleges and schools where their children could receive Catholic education, and religious houses re-established on their native soil. The religious, on their side, after a season of terror and trial, found themselves at last happily settled in their own country, where hitherto the very existence of a monastery had been almost an impossibility; while aspirants to the religious state were no longer under the necessity of a life-long banishment to another land. Thus was it to be that Almighty God, who knows how to bring good out of evil, was destining England to reap this great benefit from the errors of other nations. Religious intolerance had long been on the wane there, and in spite of a few isolated efforts at exciting a "No Popery" riot from the ignorant populace, most educated and well-informed persons began to see the mistake of persecuting loyal subjects, and to laugh at the old prejudices against them. On the other hand the standard of English Catholics themselves had evidently fallen lower during the past century. The laws enacted by William III. in the year 1700, against their inheriting or purchasing property had caused many apostasies from the faith, and as capital punishment for religious belief had ceased, there was no longer the former stimulus to fervour, nor the frequent martyrdoms to draw down blessings on the survivors. It seems to be a well ascertained fact that our religious houses abroad numbered much fewer inmates towards the end of the 18th century than ever before. We may cite our own as an example of this. In 1650 the convent counted forty dames and fifteen sisters. At its dissolution in 1794 there were only thirteen of the former and nine of the latter. At Pontoise, which had formerly been a very flourishing community, the numbers had sunk in 1784 to ten dames and four sisters, and probably all our monasteries could tell the same tale. This is decidedly a proof of the decline of fervour to which we have alluded, since so few English persons were then seeking the more perfect life. Of course, there were some other causes also to account for this state of things. Several of the old Catholic families had become extinct, others had apostatised to save their property, while others again had lost their religion through mixed marriages; but both these latter cases are only a further proof of the diminution of fervour in our poor country, where formerly the most violent persecutions had been heroically endured for the faith. Considering all this and the un-catholic spirit then spreading in England, as shown by the histories of the "Catholic Committee" and the "Cisalpine Club," we see

State of the
English mon-
asteries in the
eighteenth
century.

plainly the finger of God in the results of the French Revolution which brought over such numbers of exemplary clergy from France, and so many religious communities from Flanders and other countries, that the tone of English Catholics was at last gradually and insensibly raised, while the removal of the former difficulties regarding education enabled their children to be brought up in sound religious principles which affected the whole of their after life. We now resume our chronicle.

On the death of Lady Baptist Phillips, Dame Magdalen Arden was chosen as her successor. She was the daughter of James Arden, Esq., of Manuel Hall, in Worcestershire, and was about forty-five years old at the time of her election. The new Abbess was linked in the closest ties of friendship with Mother Mary More, then Prioress of the English Augustinian nuns at Bruges, a saintly woman, who was lineally descended from the blessed martyr, Sir Thomas More. The first events of any note after Lady Magdalen's election, were the deaths of three lay-sisters at a very short interval apart. Sister Margaret Gerard died on the 30th of December, Sister Clare Bond only two days later, and Sister Placida Gore, on the 25th of February. These three deaths, coming so soon after four others which had occurred within the past three years, were looked upon as a great trouble to the community, especially as most of them were premature, so far as the sisters' ages were concerned. It has been thought that the indiscreet fervour of the converse sisters about this time was partly responsible for the state of things. However, one young sister, Sister Anne Weardon was professed in the course of the year 1782.

In the month of July, our community was once more favoured with a visit from July. English royalty. This time, however, the visitors were not members of the Stuart family, to whom our sisters were so devoted, but relations of the reigning king. The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester,* with their two little children, were making a tour on the continent, and they visited and were entertained by the Lady Abbess and her nuns, showing themselves so much gratified with their reception as to express a wish to repeat the call when they should again pass through Ghent, as the following letters, the originals of which are still in our possession, testify :

"Friday morning,

" $\frac{1}{2}$ past seven.

"The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester are very much obliged to the Lady Abbess and her family for their kind enquiries—can assure them they were far from being fatigued at the Convent, on the contrary, they think with great satisfaction of calling upon the Lady Abbess at their return, and supping with the Lady Abbess and her Family."

The following is written in a child's round hand, and bears a seal on which is a coronet with the initials S.M.

"Princess Sophia Matilda of Gloucester thanks the Lady Abbess of the Convent at Ghent, and all the ladies for their politeness to her in the morning, and hopes the Duke and Duchess will bring her and her brother to sup with them in their return to England.

"Friday morn,

"July ye 11th 1782,

"Ghent."

* William Duke of Gloucester was the third son of Frederick Prince of Wales, and brother to King George III. He died in 1805.

1782.
Sister Anne Weardon.
Towards the end of that year another death occurred, that of Dame Aloysia Langdale. Soon after this, great anxiety began to be felt about Sister Anne Weardon, whose recent profession we have mentioned. Having made herself very active in serving the sick in the infirmary, she had completely overtaxed her strength, and at last fell into such an alarmingly weak state of health that it was thought that she would never rally. After the many recent losses of lay-sisters experienced by the community, it was no matter of indifference to them to see a young and promising member reduced to this state; but Almighty God came wonderfully to their assistance. We will describe the event in the words of a manuscript of reminiscences which was compiled some years ago from the traditions and recollections of some of our older members now dead.

1783.
Our Lady of Halle.
Miraculous cure of Sister Anne Weardon.
“When Sister Anne was very young, unremitting attendance upon the sick had so broken her constitution that she fell into a gradual consumption, and became so wasted that she could hardly be turned in her bed. Her recovery by human means growing hopeless, it was proposed as a last resource that a pilgrimage in her behalf to the shrine of Our Lady of Halle* should be undertaken. The convent chaplain, Father McMahon, and a Miss Ackerman, one of the boarders, performed the devotion in Sister Anne’s name. At the very time that Mass was said for the sufferer at the shrine, and correspondingly at the convent altar, Sister Anne was instantaneously endowed with health and strength, and, rising from her bed and throwing around her what covering came first to hand (she had no clothes left her in her state of hopeless illness), crept into the lowest corner of the church to make her devout thanksgiving.”

January 28.
This miracle took place on the 28th of January, 1783. Our sisters made no secret of it, and an account of the event was published in England by Coghlan, the Catholic publisher, in a pamphlet entitled “An Account of the miraculous cure wrought by the intercession of the B. V. Mary on Sister Jean Weardon, a nun of the English Benedictine Convent at Ghent, on the 28th of January, 1783.”

1784.
The following August, we lost Dame Agnes Gillibrand, a jubilarian, and in January, 1784, another lay-sister, Sister Teresa Haskew.

December 24
Sister Elizabeth Willacy appears to have been the last lay-sister buried at Ghent; of whom it is related that, when on her death-bed, she promised that if hereafter she had any power with God she would beg Him to grant a longer life to our converse sisters in future. Her prayer seems to have been wonderfully answered, as from that day forward the sisters have nearly all lived to a good old age.

Dissolution of the Monastery of Pontoise.
During this year (1784) our sisters received tidings of a very painful character. The Abbey at Pontoise, the oldest and most interesting of our branch houses, was ruined, and the nuns obliged to disperse. The cause of this catastrophe was an accumulation of pecuniary difficulties, owing in part to expenses undertaken in expectation of legacies, etc., promised them by Queen Mary, wife of James II., promises which her subsequent misfortunes prevented her from realising; and in part to the failure of a bank in which much community property was invested. The debts of the monastery became so serious that the building had to be sold in order to defray them, and the community obtained

* The shrine of our Lady of Halle, or Haut, in Hainault, was for many centuries visited with great devotion by pilgrims.

leave from the Archbishop of Rouen, their Ordinary, to seek an asylum in other religious houses. The Abbess, Lady Anne Clavering, with six of her nuns, joined the convent of Dunkerque, and the others went to various Benedictine monasteries. This house, like so many others, had much declined in numbers, and at the period of its dissolution reckoned only ten dames and four sisters. From the fact of the Abbess and most of the nuns having taken refuge at Dunkerque, it is considered that the latter convent (now at St. Scholastica's Abbey, Teignmouth) is the modern representative of the monastery of Pontoise as well as that of Dunkerque, and in fact all the valuable documents of the Pontoise house which were saved in 1794 are in the hands of the Teignmouth community.

The professions received by Lady Magdalen Arden in the course of the next few years were those of Sister Aloysia Gillet (June 11th, 1786), Dame Clementina Adcroft (1788) and Dame Mary Sales Eldridge.

In the month of February, 1788, our community received the tidings of the death of Prince Charles Edward Stuart at Florence. This event was one of melancholy interest to those who had ever looked upon him as their rightful king, and drew from the Lady Abbess a letter to his brother, Cardinal Henry of York, Bishop of Frascati, the last of his race, in which she expressed the deep sympathy felt by herself and her daughters with him on this sorrowful event. She received the following answer.*

1784.

1788.

Death of
Prince Charles
Edward.

"Frascati, 9th March, 1788.

"I take it most kindly from you all the obliging expressions you make use of in y^r lettre of ye 18th last month in occasion of the malencholy death of the late king my dearest brother, which I own to you has affected me very much. I am very desirous your congregation should be persuaded of the singular regard I have for such a respectable body, and how much I am convinced of their attachment and sentiments towards me and my family. You will have seen by my . . . before now the sistema I have taken in what regards publique deeds, in consequence of which the addresses of letters here . . . I accept for (from) our countrymen every expression their good heart may dictate to them to make use of.

Letter from
Cardinal
York.

"For what regards your own person, I hope you will never doubt of my kind remembrance, and that I shall allwise be glad of occasions to convince you of my sincere esteem and friendship.

"(Signed) HENRY R. CARDINAL."

On the 1st of June, 1789, the community received to profession Dame Magdalen Gibson, a near relation of Bishops Matthew and William Gibson, who were successively Vicars Apostolic of the Northern District in England. On the 22nd of the same month Sister Martha Middlehurst was professed as a lay-sister.

1789.

Towards the end of this same year, the city of Ghent was disturbed by an insurrection, followed (as is usually the case) by scenes of violence and bloodshed. To explain the origin of this disturbance, we must go back a few years.

It will of course be remembered that the Low Countries were at that time subject to Austria, whose Emperor, Joseph II., had become so far penetrated with the spirit of

The Emperor
Joseph II.

* We have not the original of this answer; and, in the copying, some of the expressions seem to have been changed or lost, and one sentence is quite unintelligible. We give the best version of it that we can.

1789.

Disaffection of
the Emperor's
subjects in
the Low
Countries.

Jansenism and the Eighteenth Century philosophy that he had, for some years past, been introducing innovations of a very dangerous character, as regards religion, into his own country, including the gradual suppression of religious houses. The student of modern history will remember how Pope Pius VI. actually travelled to Vienna to pay a personal visit to the Emperor, in the hope of inducing him to reconsider his rash projects, but without any effect. In the year 1781, he decided upon spreading these innovations into the Netherlands. Here, however, he met with very decided opposition; not only the bishops, but also the inferior clergy and the laity, whose strong Catholic instincts are well-known, refused to enter into his views. The noble and intrepid Cardinal de Frankenberg, Archbishop of Mechlin, raised his voice in loud remonstrances, as did also one or two of his colleagues in the episcopate. They were not listened to, however, and the innovations went on gradually, the Mendicant Orders being partly suppressed, and the bishops' mandates interfered with by the government. The suppression of the diocesan seminaries (for which one general seminary, to be conducted on the Emperor's own plan, was substituted) was the signal for the first outbreak. The seminarists rebelled against their new teachers, and in a short time the seminary was almost deserted; this was towards the close of 1786. The Emperor had not the prudence to change his measures, although he must have seen the growing discontent of his Belgian subjects. On the contrary, finding that his governor in Brabant was disposed to be conciliating, he replaced him by another, from whom he had nothing to fear on this head. It was in vain that the Papal Nuncio had remonstrated—it only caused him to be ordered out of the Austrian dominions. Disaffection was now spreading in the states of Hainault, Mechlin, and a part of Brabant, and at last, after a vain attempt on the part of the latter to make an accommodation with the government (in June, 1789) a general insurrection broke out. Joseph II. now saw that he had gone too far and offered an amnesty, but it was too late, and the rebels would accept nothing from him.* Of course, as is usual on such occasions, the heat and excitement of the patriots carried them to excesses, and although in the beginning their principles had been right, it is impossible to defend the means they employed to obtain their ends. Still we do not hear of their having committed any of the violences which the Imperial troops perpetrated, and any kind of sacrilege (of which the latter perpetrated many) was not likely to come from those who were, at least nominally, defending religion.

The city of Ghent appears to have suffered very much in the course of this insurrection, which reached it in the month of November. The following letter, written by Dame Anselm Tempest to her brother, Stephen Tempest, Esq., of Broughton Hall, gives a sufficiently graphic description of the terrors experienced by our sisters in what they call the "siege" of the town.†

"My dear Brother,

"I hope before this my sister has received my last letter with an account of our safety. I was in too great a hurry to mention any particulars, so inclosed a Pamphlet in it. We are now, thank God, quite quiet, and have more than ten thousand

* The above particulars are derived chiefly from the book entitled "*Histoire Générale de l'Eglise de Bérault-Bercastel avec continuation par M. le Baron Henrion*," Vol. XI, Livre XI, pp. 478, *et seq.*

† We are indebted for this letter to the kindness of Mrs. Tempest, of Coleby Hall, in Lincolnshire.

Patriots in Town, and all the country has surrendered, so I hope now we shall live in peace and quiet. They talk of making it into a Republick, so thanks be to God we shall have nothing to do more with the Emperor, for I assure you we would not undergo again for all the world such another 4 days siege, where nothing was to be seen or heard but what was melancholy or frightfull, as the Houses on fire, shooting of Guns, Cannons, Fire-balls, Bums,* &c., &c. Our street the first day was not a moment quiet, as the Souldgers Casarns† if you remember is at the top of our hill, and the Bullets came fast in at the windows, that we was obliged to spend the whole day in the cellar. At 5 o'clock in the evening they got drunk with brandy mixt with gunpowder to take of all sensibility of humanity (which was no way necessary). At that time they rung and shot most violently against our door, and swore they would have it down; I leave you to guess what we suffered in those dreadful moments. This lasted an hour. We can attribute our safety to nothing but to some Billets which we plastered upon every door and window in the house, and done some particular devotion for many months, that we might be preserved. The words are what we found in a Book of miracles of our B^d Lady, which words are as follows (Mary was conceived without sin). We recommended the same to some of our Friends and Neighbours, and those that had them were never molested. Everyone protested that nothing but a miracle has preserved the whole country, for there was very few Patriots against a numerous army of Milletry, but God Almighty was their General and Director, for the Patriots courage surpassed everything, they was in no form nor dress, it was just like a mob, some with Guns, some with Pistols, some with Swords, Spits, forks, hatchets, &c., &c., &c., and with nightcaps on. The first day there was a violent battle fought in our street, three Cannon placed against our house, fourteen Souldgers were shot, and some of them remained for three days; I saw three shot in a garden, and had near been shot myself, for when I thought all was over, I went to peep out of a little hole into the street, where I found a flash of fire in my face of a Gun that a souldger was letting off, believe me my curiosity was soon satisfied. The three last days we lived in the garret, hoping if the souldgers came in they would not find us. Our milletry are still in close prison, it is thought by most that Collonel Sunden, as he was the Commander in town, that he will hang for it. As each one is examined apart, they all declare the same, that he told them when they began that if they would do their best he would make them all Collonels for two days, that they might Pillage, kill and Burn the whole Town. He soon retired to the Casarns after the Battle begun, to keep out of all danger, and writ letters to the Castle (the place where all the artillery and ammonition is kept) to beg the Dragoons to through out their fire Balls and Bums as quick as they could that the Town might be destroyed; happy for our End of the Town they had no fire Balls ready, and had not the Patriots all agreed together to Batter the Casarns down, he declared he would not surrender, but a Cannon Ball went into the room where he was set with all the Officers, so then he put a white handkerchief at the end of his sword, and opened the doors and asked mercy. They chained them two and two together, and carried ym to prison. They made them all give up their swords, hats, sticks, guns and great coats.

1789.
Siege of
Ghent.

Uproar in the
streets.

Colonel
Sunden.

* Bombs.

† "Casernes" i.e., Barracks. The great Barrack was on St. Peter's Hill.

1780.

Never was the Milletry Pride so much tuched as to be conducted along the streets in such a manner. They did not pass our Street, which we was sorry for. They examined all their Pockets and found great Treasures that they had stole, even in their hair—the Officers as well as souldgers: the Emperor's troops are disgraced for ever. In Col. Sunden's pockets they found great Quantity of Letters from the Emperor and General Dalton at Bruxelles, one with Strict Orders that on the 24th of last month, they should kill every priest and Religious man and woman in the country. All their spite was against us, so it was happy that the Patriots came in on the 13th. Since that they have found all the Ropes ready prepared for our executions, it makes me tremble when I think of it; I should have found it very hard to conform myself to be martyred by souldgers. All the world must own that God alone has saved us. It is now the fashion for everyone to be Patriots; we have above ten thousand listed ones in this Town, and all Towns equivalent. They are geting their uniform made as fast as they can. I suppose you know all the country has surrendered. We are to have 3 Regiments, one of Horse, one of foot, and one of Hoozars; their Cloathing, Artilery, &c. &c. &c. won't cost much, as they have found enough belonging to the Emperor. This country provided great parts of Germany with every thing for the Troops, so he has also lost that. I am sorry General Dalton has got off with the Minister, as they wished to have ruined the Country. This Dalton* is from Vienna, also Irish, but not the same that you might have heard spoke of at Liege. He was heard to say, as he was running out of Bruxelles, that he would soon bring a sufficient army that would master them all, but I trust in God it will be impossible for them to do it. We had a very kind invitation from the Convent of the Third Order at Bruges† to retire to [them] while all was over here, but we could not get out of town. There was neither Post Carriages nor Barges‡ went for two weeks; no one might stir, so it was happy my D^r Brother Charls did not come; he would have been killed if he had, which would have killed me, for beleave me we wanted no addition to our frights. We could have no prayers§ of ten days, not even on Sunday, as all was afraid of more milletry coming in. No place has suffered like Gant; the Paper would let you see what abomination was committed; the worst is not put in, as it was not fit to appear in print. They set a Convent in town on fire, used them ill, and got into their Church, took the Ciborium out, and threw the B^d. S. upon the Ground, trodd upon it, and threw it into the little House, and greased their Shoes with the Holy O[il]. Roasted a priest alive and burnt another; there is a great many of them hanged, and in a short time I beleave all will. I beg my Comp^{ts} to Lady and Miss Eyre, am sorry Miss should think I have forgot her. I can never forget my friends, therefore am still gratefull for hers and all her Familys kindness to me

Sacrileges
committed by
the military.

* Richard D'Alton and his cousin, Edward D'Alton, were both created Counts of the Holy Roman Empire by the Empress Maria Theresa, and Knights Commanders of the Theresian Order. Both were generals in the Imperial army, but as Richard was the Emperor's Commander-in-Chief in the Low Countries, he is probably the person here spoken of. The family is said to have descended from Sir Walter D'Alton, a Norman knight, who joined Strongbow, and obtained possessions in Westmeath and Tipperary in the beginning of the 12th century.

† The English Franciscan nuns, founded at Brussels in 1621, removed to Nieuport in 1637, and then to Bruges in 1662. They are now settled at Taunton, in Somersetshire.

‡ It must be remembered that the city of Ghent is on the rivers Lys and Scheldt, and is intersected with canals, so that barges are a common mode of conveyance.

§ Mass.

when at Gant. She will have a letter from here soon; you will let her know the particulars of our frights. I hope to hear from you soon. My kind love to my sister. I have only place to add My Lady's, Mrs. Maire, Mr. MacMahon and each one's particular comp^{ts}

1789.

"I am, my dear Brother,

"Yours most affectionately,

"M. A. T.

"Gant, Dec^{ber} 20, 1789."

The Belgian affairs were quieted sooner than might have been expected. The Emperor Joseph died on the 20th of February, 1790, and was succeeded by his brother, Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Leopold assured the people of the Low Countries that they should be restored to all their former privileges in both religious and civil affairs if they would return to obedience and loyalty. The people who had become intoxicated with their independence, at first refused, but after a few battles, Bender, the Austrian general, after offering a delay, that they might have time to fly to the Emperor's clemency, took another line of action, and, followed by his army, he took the whole of Belgium in a few days. He entered Brussels in triumph on the 2nd of December, 1790. All was now put on the same footing as before, and thus the affair ended.

1790.

During the year 1790, our community professed two lay-sisters, Winefride Hayes and Teresa Musché. The latter afterwards became the last survivor of our Ghent sisters. Her parents were Flemish country-people, and at first Lady Magdalen Arden had hesitated about receiving her as a postulant, as the convent had always preferred keeping to English subjects; but the candidate was of so pleasing and gentle a bearing that in the end the Abbess deviated from the general rule and admitted her to trial, and she never had reason to regret having done so.

The same year departed this life Dame Romana Alexander, a venerable jubilarian, on the 26th of April, and in the autumn Sister Winifride Nagle, a choir novice, died without having the happiness of making her vows. Another jubilarian, Dame Catherine Sheldon, passed away in the February of the following year.

During the year 1791, a measure of great importance for the Catholics of England was adopted by the government in their country. A Toleration Act was passed, by which all Catholics taking the oath which had been required in Ireland a few years previously were exempted from all penalties for hearing Mass; and even permitting this religious act to be substituted in the eye of the law for that of attendance in the Protestant Church on Sundays; allowing also that Catholics should teach as schoolmasters or mistresses, live in London, be priests or religious, and own lands without registering them as they had formerly been required to do. The oath required was one of allegiance to the actual Royal Family and their Protestant heirs, and it contained a disclaimer of certain doctrines popularly imputed to Catholics, such as the lawfulness of murdering or deposing excommunicated princes, and of keeping no faith with heretics, &c. The importance of this act to Catholics can hardly be over-estimated, since it held out a prospect of the possibility of returning to England to the members of our colleges and religious establishments abroad, in case the revolution, which was already making fearful havoc in France, spread further.

1791.

Toleration Act
in England.

1792.

The following year passed quietly at Ghent. Terrible news of the state of affairs in France reached them from time to time, and after the experience they had had themselves three years before, our sisters could well sympathise with the members of the French convents, who were undergoing terrors and persecutions. But for the present, Flanders appeared to be safe, though it was growing daily more doubtful how long it would continue so.

The death of Dame Bernard Pullen occurred in the December of that year.

1793.

In the month of January, 1793, came the terrible news of the execution of the French King. This was followed by a declaration of war between France and England, and the position of English residents in the French dominions now became extremely precarious. In effect the news received during the course of that year of the various British houses so situated was alarming enough. Douay College was seized by Government Officials in the month of October, and its inmates declared prisoners. They were soon after conveyed to the citadel at Dourlens, where they were kept in strict confinement. The Scotch and Irish colleges had disbanded their members previously, and thus avoided a similar fate. The Anglo-Benedictines of St. Gregory's had likewise mostly fled to England; the prior and five monks who had remained in charge of the house were taken to Dourlens where they shared the imprisonment of the collegians. The inmates of the St. Omer College were imprisoned in their own town and afterwards removed to Arras. The English Franciscans at Douay were dispersed about the same time. The monks of St. Laurence's at Dieulwart were likewise turned out of their monastery; the nuns of Cambray were imprisoned at Compiègne; those of Paris were shut up in their own house, and afterwards conveyed to the fortress at Vincennes; our sisters at Dunkerque were imprisoned together with the English Poor Clares of the same town, and were soon joined by the Poor Clare communities of Gravelines and Rouen; while the English monks of Paris were completely scattered. Thus a few months saw the ruin of nearly all the flourishing British colonies in France and Belgium. The Canonesses of Neuilly were imprisoned in their own convent and suffered much, but they succeeded in remaining together, and later when the storm was over, continued their former way of living in their old home, which they had never left. Our sisters of Ypres alone remained unharmed; they had had their troubles earlier.

1794.

The year 1794 was an ominous one for Flanders and the neighbouring provinces. The French Republic was now extending its conquests, and its power was gradually increasing. It was soon known in the Netherlands that the French army might be expected any day, and preparations were made for its reception. The Austrians sent forces to defend their territories, and the Duke of York* made a campaign, at the head of 30,000 Englishmen, with the same object, but neither of these bands was well managed or likely to prove successful.

May.

In the month of May the Professors and students of the English College at St. Omer were transferred from Arras to Dourlens. About the same time the ex-Jesuits of Liège were turned out of their "Academy," and fled to England, where Mr. Weld, of Lulworth, gave them the property of Stonyhurst in Lancashire, which their successors

* Frederic, Duke of York, was the second son of King George III. He died in 1827.

still possess. The Sepulchrine nuns left Liège at the same time to proceed to England, which, however, they did not succeed in reaching for some months.

And what of our own community?

They soon realised that the breaking up of their old home was only a question of time, and the recent Act of Toleration for Catholics, together with the generous welcome lately given by the English to the French emigrant clergy, determined them once more to seek their native country, as soon as they should be expelled from the home which had sheltered them for 170 years. They took the precaution therefore of sending over to England some of the heavier and more valuable portion of their property; and the handsome altar-tabernacle, Dame Eugenia Pulton's great clock, the old alarum, some of the Church-plate and vestments, a few of the records and papers and divers small articles reached England in safety. Some things (probably including the reliquaries, old books and pictures, of which we still have a fair number from Ghent) are said to have been sent by the chaplain who remained in Flanders some little time after the departure of the community.

1794.
Preparations
for moving.

The school was in a flourishing state when it was of necessity broken up, and numbered from twenty to thirty pupils, many of whom were Belgians. These were easily sent to their respective homes, much to the regret of their parents, with whom the English education was in great esteem. Of the English children, at least four remained to share the fate of their mistresses, one of them being a little Miss Lucas, from Warwickshire, who had been early left an orphan, and had been entrusted to our sisters by her uncle, at the age of eight; she was now fourteen. The names of the other three have not been preserved.

Breaking up
of the school.

An interesting tradition has been handed down in our community from these times with such circumstantial detail that it seems impossible to doubt that it is substantially true.

It is said, then, that our sisters at Ghent possessed so valuable a treasure as the incorrupt body of a saintly nun, probably Lady Lucy Knatchbull,* our first abbess. When the invasion of the French became imminent, they were anxious not to leave so precious a possession where it would be in danger of being profaned, so it was determined to conceal it in a secure hiding-place. Accordingly, one night after the community had retired to rest, two nuns appointed sat up to superintend the labours of their trusty man-servant and a mason, both of whom had promised secrecy. The nuns wrote a document, attesting whose body it was and relating its translation, while the workmen took the coffin from its resting place. The paper was put into it, and the lid was again fastened down. The coffin was then placed in an aperture in the wall and carefully bricked up. It would be of the deepest interest to know if it has ever been discovered, or if it is yet discoverable. This incident was for many years kept a profound secret and only whispered in the community, but the reason for such secrecy—if reason there ever really was—no longer exists.

Lady Lucy's
body.

* With the progress of time, the tradition on this subject has become a little less clear, and the name of the saintly nun has been lost. The story, however, as still told amongst us, says that it was an abbess, and *the* abbess who was renowned for her gift of prayer, which leaves but little doubt as to her identity. Of Lady Lucy Knatchbull, her kinswoman, Lady Mary, wrote in 1718: "Lady Lucy, first abbess of this monastery, was thought by her Ghostly Father to have received great favours from God in prayer;" and this is more fully described in her mortuary-bill written soon after her death.

1794.

Invasion of
the French.

The battle.

Our Lady
protects the
monastery.

The expected attack soon came, and the alarm was raised that the French were at the gates of the town. The Austrian troops and the Duke of York with his band of Englishmen were on the spot, and a fierce battle ensued. As soon as the enemy was known to have entered the town, our sisters hastened to inscribe on every door and window, as before, during the Austrian siege, the words "Oh Mary, conceived without sin," &c. It is said that the battle could be plainly witnessed from the windows of the infirmary; and these being so near the scene of danger, no one dared approach them closely enough to put Our Lady's device there, and these windows alone were broken by the cannon balls. However this may be, Our Lady did certainly protect her children, not one of whom received any injury though so near the field of action. It is related that Dame Joseph Molyneux, the portress, was hastily crossing the garden when her foot caught in the grass and she fell. At that very instant a cannon ball passed over her head, which, had she been erect, would probably have killed her.

The state of uncertainty as to the issue of the battle does not seem to have lasted very long. Neither the Duke of York nor his men had had much military experience, and it soon became evident to our sisters that flight was imminent.

June 12.

In the midst of these anxieties the convent was summoned to attend the death-bed of the Mother Prioress, Dame Teresa Hodgson. She had lived just long enough to witness the near prospect of the breaking up of the old home, and died on the 12th of June at the age of fifty.

Removal of
the marble
altar.

The last precaution was the removing of the marble altar from the church to a place of safety. It was almost new, and, being very handsome, was much valued by the community. M. Portois, the sculptor who had carved it, was asked to take charge of it for the present, and he had it taken to pieces and carried to his magazine during the night under cover of the darkness, and at some risk, for the town was in a very disturbed and excited state. This was only six or seven days before the departure from Ghent.

Mr. Dicconson.

The Lady Abbess must have been relieved of a great part of the anxiety attendant on the necessity of removal when it became known that Mr. Dicconson, of Wrightington Hall, in Lancashire, had landed in Flanders with the express intention of rendering assistance to the Ghent community. This good gentleman afterwards said he thought he had been inspired to cross the channel and act as chaperone to our sisters.

Frederic Duke
of York.

The sacred inclosure was now at an end. The Duke of York's soldiers had requested Dame Mary Joseph Molyneux, the portress, to deliver up her keys, that the military stores might be placed in this, the only English house of any importance in Ghent, and nothing was now thought of but leaving the country as quickly as possible. The Duke of York came generously to the rescue, and ordered his men to place the military waggons at the disposal of the nuns, and convey their baggage to Antwerp, where Mr. Dicconson had engaged a passage for them on board a ship. In vain did the men demur that their waggons were already in full work; he insisted and was obeyed. Carriages were also hired for some of the party.

June 23.

Flight from
Ghent.

It was on the 23rd of June, being the Monday within the octave of Corpus Christi that our sisters left their beloved monastery. They were disguised in such secular clothes as they could hastily procure, for it would not have been prudent to show themselves in

the religious dress either to the French or English at that time. They departed to the great regret of their numerous friends in Ghent; their old pupil, Miss Ackerman, took charge of a few articles of furniture of small value, while her step-mother was pleased to be able to advance the sum of twelve louis to the Lady Abbess, towards the expenses of the travelling carriages. The town was being bombarded as they left it, and in effect it did not hold out much longer.

Arrived at Antwerp, the community had another cause for anxiety. A young religious, Dame Sales Eldridge. Dame Mary Sales Eldridge, of a highly nervous temperament, had been so completely unhinged by the scenes she had witnessed and the terrors they had all gone through that when, as the climax of all, she came within sight of the sea, her reason quite forsook her. What to do with her now became the difficulty; but it was perhaps hoped that once the voyage was over she would calm down. But it was found that the whole party (numbering some two or three-and-twenty persons, a few of the lay-sisters having remained behind) could not be accommodated in the boat; so in default of a Prioress, the Lady Abbess desired Dame Frances Hesketh, the Procuratrix, to head that half of the community, including the four children, which she selected to accompany Mr. Dicconson, while she herself, with Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld, Dame Anselm Tempest and a few others, remained at Antwerp, awaiting an opportunity of taking passage in another vessel. Poor Dame Sales Eldridge was to accompany this first party, but it was found impossible to persuade her to embark, so they were obliged to leave her behind. She was conveyed as promptly as possible to Velsique, where a community of nuns, known to our sisters, who had not as yet been disturbed by the revolution, took charge of mental patients. She never recovered sufficiently to come to England.

The voyage of the first party of fugitives was prosperous, and they landed in Arrival of the first party in London. London in a couple of days.

Bishop Douglass, Vicar-Apostolic of the London District, has the following interesting entry in his diary, which is still preserved in the Westminster Archives:—

1794. "Mrs Hesketh or Brockholes, the Procuratrix of Ghent, with eight of her nuns and four young ladies arrived in London, June the 26th in the evening, under the care of — Dicconson, Esq., of Wroughtington. They all lodged at Mrs. Booker's in Bond Street, and mean to go down to Lancashire."

Mrs. Booker was the widow of the Catholic bookseller and publisher, Thomas Booker, Mrs. Booker. who had died the previous year, and whose business was carried on by his widow and two sons. We can easily imagine the warm welcome given by this excellent woman to the nuns and their pupils, and the kind hospitality which they received from her during their short stay in London. They then proceeded to Lancashire, where Mr. Dicconson received several of their number into his mansion at Wroughtington, and Dame Frances Hesketh went to her former home of The Maynes, accompanied by a few The Maynes. others. Dame Frances had outlived all her brothers and sisters, and the old manor was now the property of Mr. William Fitzherbert Brockholes, brother-in-law to her brother Joseph Hesketh Brockholes. This gentleman gladly offered a temporary home to her and her companions.

In the meanwhile the Lady Abbess and those who had remained with her at Antwerp June 30 were engaged in a transaction which cost them later a good deal of trouble. A citizen

1794.

of Ghent named Fryson, a manufacturer of white lead, presented himself to them, asking to become the purchaser of the property they had left behind in that city; namely the house and land and such of the furniture as still remained there. It seems almost strange that our sisters should have consented to sell their house behind their backs, before they knew with certainty that they would ever find another home. On the other hand, it must be remembered that it seemed highly doubtful that they could ever live there again, judging by the proceedings of the French Republic elsewhere; and the monastery, left to its fate, would only fall into the hands of the Republican Government, from which they would probably have received no indemnification at all. Moreover it is evident that Fryson verbally agreed to look upon himself as caretaker rather than proprietor, and promised to give up the property if at any future time the community should claim it, though on the other hand it must be admitted that this agreement was neither expressed nor even hinted at in the document drawn up at the time (of which we have a copy), which is in reality a deed of sale, but a very unsatisfactory one.* Moreover we would observe that no number of individuals, although it include the Abbess herself, could lawfully dispose of the principal property of a community without the consent of the Chapter. And again, we would remark that the terms of purchase appear to have been very imprudent. They express that the price agreed to for the abbey buildings and lands should be 1,400 French louis,† of which Fryson was to pay 200 on the spot,‡ binding himself to give the rest by instalments of 100 per annum for twelve years. This was trusting a good deal to the honour and honesty of a man who would be completely beyond the reach of his creditors, living as he did in another country. Such furniture as remained in the monastery was valued at 800 livres of current money of Brabant, and this too he agreed to pay at once. This bargain, concluded hurriedly and probably without much reflection, was destined to cause a good deal of trouble and anxiety, while apparently in the event, no money was received or profit reaped from it.

The Lady Abbess with her companions succeeded in embarking for England through the assistance of Mrs. Frances Henrietta Maire,§ formerly a pupil in the monastery, and who had latterly resided there as a boarder. They landed at Dover and proceeded to London. The state of utter destitution in which they were was pithily expressed by Mr. Frank Williams, Mr. Stephen Tempest's lawyer, who wrote to that gentleman that Dame Anselm had arrived in London "with scarcely a rag to her tail," and that he must at once send her some money for clothes. Mrs. Maire, having brought her friends to England in safety, travelled to Lartington Hall, the residence of her family, while the nuns for the most part followed the earlier refugees into Lancashire. It seemed as if Almighty God had spared Mrs. Maire's life expressly for the fulfilment

* See Appendix I, No. 21, and note at the end.

† Probably about £1,295.

‡ From subsequent correspondence it appears very doubtful whether Fryson ever paid even these 200 louis.

§ Frances Henrietta Maire (called "Mrs. Maire" according to the custom of that time with elderly persons) was daughter of Thomas Maire, Esq., of Lartington Hall, in Yorkshire, and Mary, daughter of Richard Fermor, of Tusmore. She was born in October, 1705, and was educated at Ghent, where her sister Mary (probably identical with Dame Josepha Maire) became a nun. In after life she distinguished herself for her dutiful attention to her father in his declining years. After his death in 1752, she seems to have passed most of her time at Ghent with her old friends, and was thus enabled to render them assistance in the hour of need. Mrs. Maire belonged to an old Catholic family, allied with the Fermors, Lawsons, and Tempests. She had four brothers educated at Douay College, two of whom, Richard and Marmaduke, died there while still young.

Sale of the
monastery.

Landing of
the second
party.

of this duty of friendship, for she died on the 8th of October that same year (1794) at Lartington, aged eighty-nine. We still have a Mass offered up for her every year.

1794.

Death of
Mrs. Maire.

We have mentioned above that two or three brave lay-sisters remained at Ghent after the rest of the community had left, in hopes of saving some of the convent property; perhaps they even thought it possible that the building itself might be rescued, and that when the first storm had passed over, better times might come after all. They met with many adventures during the few weeks which they passed courageously in the midst of the scene of war. We will relate some of these in the words of the manuscript of reminiscences which we have before alluded to.

"They stayed till July, protected by the occasional presence of the English soldiers, receiving no incivility from any, and meanwhile doing what they could towards rescuing or turning to good account the community effects.

Adventures of
the three
lay-sisters.

"But when, in a sanguinary struggle, the troops of the Duke of York were cut to pieces in the streets of Ghent, and the Duke himself was forced to ride for his life without drawing bridle to Antwerp; when there was not only no protection for the convent, but the enemy was actually within its walls, then, and not till then, did the last inmates make a hurried retreat, and bid a last farewell to the beloved roof which, for 170 years, had sheltered the innocent lives of generations of English women, nobler far by their religious virtues than even by their high descent and breeding

"We still preserve, as a relic of those troubled last days in Ghent, some pieces of altar-linen riddled with shot, which Sister Martha had carried down to the bleachery on the convent side of the river that washed the walls of our dear old home at Ghent. This same thrifty sister, at the very time of the enemy's entrance, was engaged in a bargain for the sale of the pewter cups used in the refectory of the religious. The soldiers, carelessly turning over the collected heap, depreciated their material, but comforted themselves with the sacrilegious remark that 'they would find plenty of silver stuff yonder,' indicating the venerable church of St. Peter, just opposite the convent. Poor Sister Martha was so horrified that she left her unfinished bargain at a disadvantage.*

"The sisters would tell long after, how the priest, unable to enter the church, put a little child through the sacristy window, who brought away in his innocent fingers the ciborium with its sacred treasure.

"On the whole, however, the French soldiers behaved better than might have been expected, and the sisters stole away in safety, though by what means they effected their passage to England does not now clearly appear."

Thus the whole community at last reached their native land in safety. They were not numerous at the time, and, having just lost Dame Teresa Hodgson by death, and Dame Sales Eldridge by the circumstances we have described, were reduced to twelve dames and nine sisters whom we may name as follows:—

* The sisters appear to have been somewhat light-hearted even during this critical time, and to have indulged in an occasional jest. It is related of one that she filled a trunk with blacking-brushes and rags, locked it, and appeared to be carefully guarding it. One of the soldiers, concluding that it contained articles of value, determined to open it, which she stoutly resisted. At last his cupidity became too strong to be withstood, and he forced the lock open, while the sister ran off laughing, delighted at his disappointment.

1794.

Names of the
nuns who
arrived in
England.

Lady Magdalen Arden, Abbess. (The office of Prioress was vacant.)

Dame Clare Throckmorton.

Dame Frances Hesketh, Procuratrix.

Dame Placida Jones.

Dame Xaveria Boone, Celleraire.

Dame Mary Anselm Tempest.

Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld, Mistress of Pensioners.

Dame Mary Stanislaus White.

Dame Baptist Farrar.

Dame M. Joseph Molyneux, Portress.

Dame Clementina Adcroft.

Dame Magdalen Gibson.

Sister Scholastica Rimmer.

Sister Frances Champ.

Sister Benedicta Tasker.

Sister Magdalen Edmonds.

Sister Anne Weardon.

Sister Aloysia Gillet.

Sister Martha Middlehurst.

Sister Winefride Hayes.

Sister Teresa Musché.

We may add the little pensioner who afterwards became Dame Bernard Lucas.

It was impossible for some time to assemble again in community, for they had neither house, furniture, nor means, so the nuns remained scattered in the houses of friends for at least eight months. The Lady Abbess with a few others were the guests of the Rev. Antony Lund, priest of the mission of Fernyhalgh, near Preston; Dame Frances Hesketh with Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld and Dame Xaveria Boone were at The Maynes; a large party was entertained by Mr. Dicconson, at Wrightington Hall, and Dames Anselm Tempest, Joseph Molyneux and Magdalen Gibson went to their respective families.

Anecdotes.

Several anecdotes are told both of the voyage across the channel and of this succeeding period. It is related, for instance, that at the escape from Ghent such hurried attempts were made at secular disguise that the appearance of some of the nuns was quite ludicrous. Dame Magdalen Gibson, always rather peculiar, looked so extraordinary as to rivet the attention even of the boatmen. Then we hear that Mr. Dicconson completely mystified his servant when he desired him to "take a coach and go to meet the nuns from France." Nuns had been unknown in England for more than two hundred years, and the man had never heard of such things. After consulting with a fellow-servant, they both came to the conclusion that they must be "some new kind of potato from France." Another story is told of Dame Mary Joseph Molyneux, in whose family a wedding took place while she was residing with them. She was asked to be present on the occasion and went accordingly, attired in the dress usually worn by the ladies of that period. As the wedding party alighted from their carriages, a shoemaker, stepping forward from the admiring crowd, said, addressing Dame Joseph: "I b'lieve marm I once

had the honour of making *your* wedding shoes!" But she indignantly replied: "No indeed, that you never had."

And what became of our poor city of Ghent?

The Republican Government effected many changes, and for the most part they were sad ones. The practices of religion were abolished by law throughout Flanders and the neighbouring provinces, so Ghent like other towns soon presented a completely new aspect. The monasteries and abbeys were all suppressed, and it is said that many of their former inmates died of grief at witnessing the fate of their beloved homes. The Bishop, Prince Lobkowitz, fled to Germany and died the following year at Munster. The Abbot of St. Peter's, Dom Vandeveld, also sought safety in flight, and did not dare to return for some years. When the storm was over (in 1802) he came back and settled at his brother's in the town of Ghent, for the venerable Abbey of St. Peter, that had sheltered St. Dunstan, was destined never to be restored. It was left to fall to pieces, except the church, which a "virtuoso" saved by crying it up, as a repository for statues and pictures. It has been since converted into a barrack. One of the monks, Dom Sartel, together with M. Huybrecht, parish priest of S. Bavo, was exiled to Cayenne, like so many priests of the Netherlands, France, and Italy, and died there. Such were the sad tidings which gradually reached the nuns from their Ghent friends. The Flemish clergy, on the whole, seem to have been exemplary in their firm adherence to their duty, and the republicans failed signally in procuring from them the oath of hatred to royalty, so they suffered persecution for both religion and allegiance. Our sisters heard also that M. Fryson had established his lead manufactory in their old monastery, planting a wind-mill on the roof of the part that looked towards the Scheldt. The rest of the building he divided so as to make several small houses which he let; while the chapel was hired by a citizen to be used as a magazine for marble and other things; later on it was pulled down. Of Dame Sales Eldridge the nuns heard good news so far as her bodily health was concerned, but her mind did not improve much. The nuns of Velsique showed her the greatest kindness. When they, like the other religious communities, had to break up their establishment, the sister who attended Dame Sales took her with her to her own family, and continued her care for her.

During the 170 years that our community had resided at Ghent, they had received benefactions from many persons whose names are full of interest. The list of these (for which we refer our readers to the Appendix*) is by no means complete, but it probably contains the most interesting ones.

The Revolution continued to gain ground on the continent, and during the years 1794 and 1795, the other English communities from France and Flanders gradually arrived in their native country. The nuns of Brussels had left their monastery on the very same day as our sisters left Ghent, and landed in London a few days after Dame Frances Hesketh and her companions. Our sisters of Dunkerque and the Poor Clares of Gravelines, having regained their liberty, reached England in the May of 1795, and the Benedictine nuns of Cambrai and Paris in the following July. The nuns of Brussels settled at Winchester,† those of Cambrai at Wootton, near Liverpool, and those of Paris

1794.

Ghent under the Republic.

Fate of the Monastery.

Arrival of the other communities in England.

* See Appendix I., No. 22.

† In 1857, they removed to their present abode, St. Mary's Abbey, East Bergholt, co. Suffolk.

1794.

at Cannington, in Dorsetshire,* while the Poor Clares went to Yorkshire, where they remained for some years at Scorton, and they afterwards removed to Darlington. The Dominican nuns of Cardinal Howard's foundation at Brussels, reached England in July, 1794, and took up their abode at Hartpury Court, near Gloucester.†

Douay and
St. Omer
colleges.

The other sufferers from the Revolution, namely, the collegians of Douay and St. Omer were set at liberty early in 1795, and made their way to England. A considerable number of them, including two or three of the seniors of Douay and the president of St. Omer, settled at St. Edmund's College, Old Hall, which Bishop Douglass was organising into a seminary, to be a substitute for Douay, and where he had already, a year and a half before, established some of the students who had escaped after the seizure of their college, and one of the Douay professors. Others went to the north, where Bishop Gibson had commenced in October, 1794, a college for his large district at Crook Hall, near Newcastle.‡

1795.

We now return to our own community. In the Catholic Directory for 1795, the following notice appeared :—

"The Benedictine Dames from Ghent, at Preston, Lancashire, will proceed with their plan of education as soon as the house is ready."

House in
Chapel street.

The Lady Abbess, after much persevering effort, had succeeded, with the assistance of friends, in renting a house in Chapel Street, Preston, just opposite to St. Wilfrid's Catholic Church, which had been opened in June, 1793, by the two zealous ex-Jesuits, Fathers Dunn and Morgan. It was a large brick house,§ having a fair garden behind it, which garden was said to be haunted by a ghost commonly called the "Bannister Doll;" but this latter circumstance does not appear to have troubled our sisters at all; they were probably too busy struggling with real difficulties to be much occupied with imaginary ones. They had to pay for the house an annual sum of £42, exclusive of the ground rent, and for this, as also for the means of subsistence, they felt they must depend chiefly on their school, which they were planning to re-open. Mr. Fitzherbert-Brockholes had been for some months the host of the pleasing and gifted Mistress of Pensioners, Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld, to whom he made over a small pension for life, and to whose care he afterwards intrusted his two daughters.||

Community
life resumed.

It was in the month of April, 1795, that our sisters at last assembled again to resume their community life. At that date all, with the exception of two or three who were delayed by indisposition, arrived at the house in Chapel Street.¶ We can easily picture to ourselves their joy at gathering once more around their Abbess. "It is a sincere pleasure" she says in a letter to a friend "to see joy painted on each one's

* The nuns of Cambrai are now at Stanbrook, near Worcester, and those of Paris at the Mount, near Colwich, in Staffordshire.

† They are now at Carisbrooke, in the Isle of Wight.

‡ In 1803, this college was removed to Ushaw, near Durham.

§ This house, No. 8, Chapel Street, was still standing in 1883, having been used (after the departure of the nuns in 1811) as the County Police Office, and then as the Inland Revenue Office; but after that date it was pulled down, and the site is now occupied by the Liberal Reform Club.

|| Mary and Eliza Brockholes entered our school at Preston, about the year 1809. Their youngest sister, Mary Anne, came several years later to Caverswall Castle, where it was then established, after her father's death.

¶ Dame Anselm Tempest, who was a great invalid, did not arrive till June. Up to that date she had passed the time at her brother's, in Yorkshire, and at Burnley Wood.

countenance, and though we cannot suppose to meet with the conveniences we left at dear Ghent, yet I hope a due conformity to the decrees of Divine Providence will sweeten any difficulty we may meet with." And difficulties were of course met with, but the happiness of living together once more, after their eight months' exile in the world, and the return to the duties of the religious life compensated for a great deal.

There would have been much difficulty in furnishing the house, but for the kind assistance they met with. Their generous benefactor, Mr. Fitzherbert Brockholes, gave them £100 for kitchen furniture, and Mr. Roskell, of Garstang, undertook all the expenses of the bedding; other friends also came forward to help them in various ways, so their dwelling was soon rendered habitable. Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld was installed again at her old post amongst the children, for once the school was set on foot several families hastened to send their daughters to be educated under her motherly care. Three Miss Talbots of Lord Shrewsbury's family, two Miss Jeffersons, Miss Waterton, Miss Singleton, and divers other interesting and familiar names appear at various dates in the list of Preston pensioners. For a time the nuns kept a day-school as well as a boarding-school for the children of some of the families of this the most Catholic town in England; but naturally it was not so largely attended as the boarding-school. Of course it is well known that a day-school is not suitable for Benedictines, as being incompatible with the rules of inclosure. During the residence of our community in Preston, however, any attempt at inclosure was an impossibility, so this little help to their empty purse was permitted. For a time their superior, Bishop Gibson, could not provide them with a chaplain, so they had to cross the street to St. Wilfrid's to hear Mass, and we find an entry in our old account book to the effect that for some time seats were rented there by the community to the amount of twelve guineas per annum. After two years and a half they paid a much smaller sum, for even after they were provided with a chaplain (which provision was made about that time), they continued to send their pupils to the public church, though they ceased to attend it themselves. Of course from the beginning they had a room in use as a temporary chapel for the recitation of the Divine Office, which would serve also for the celebration of Mass when once they had a chaplain; but we can easily understand that its size would not be convenient for a large assembly of persons.

For some years the nuns did not venture to show themselves in the religious dress; and we find divers entries among the accounts for "a stuff dress for Dame Placida," or "a gown for Sister Anne," &c. The habit was resumed, however, before many years of the residence at Preston, though a more secular costume was still kept for outdoor wear, as England was as yet far from being ready for the sight of nuns' veils and habits in the streets. The precise date of the restoration of the religious habit in our community is no longer known.* The use of the cowl, however, was not revived till many years later, as this would have required more material than our sisters at that time could afford to purchase. Only two cowls had been brought from Ghent, and these were used at every profession for some time. They were of thicker serge, but precisely similar in pattern and dimensions to those which we now wear.

* The first mention that we find of the religious dress in England (as regards our own sisters) occurs in the account book under the date November, 1804, where an entry is to be seen of "Habit-stuff and carriage £8 9s. 6d.," but it may have been worn some years before this date, as this might refer only to the time when the habits brought from Ghent were worn out and needed renewing.

1795.

The school.

Temporary day-school.

Life at Preston.

Resuming the religious dress.

1796.

Relief
from the
government.

In the year 1796 Mr. Pitt agreed to allow £10 per annum to be paid from government to each of the English nuns whom the French revolution had driven back to their own country. This generous donation which, for a short time, furnished our community with £200 a year, was received with gratitude, though of course it gradually diminished as the Ghent members died out. Unfortunately, however, for the religious houses in general, the constant influx of new-comers into England at length increased the demand for support so much that the committee appointed for the relief of French refugees found itself obliged to discontinue this benefaction as regarded all those who had come to England since November, 1794. Our community was not affected by this measure, and profited for some time by the distribution; but our sisters of Dunkerque, the nuns of Paris, and the Poor Clares of three convents* were deprived of relief, and it seems, from Bishop Douglass's diary, that there were in all over 700 persons who shared in this loss. Dr. Douglass wrote to Mr. Pitt, the Prime Minister, in their behalf, and at first obtained a promise from him and the Duke of Portland (who was at that time the Home Secretary) that some aid should be granted to the persons in question; but in the end this came to nothing, and no measures were taken to assist them. On the whole, however, all religious and indeed all Catholics must ever remember with gratitude the kindness and generosity shown by the English government both to the emigrants and to the English victims of the French revolution, and in particular the noble assistance granted to the French priests, and there can be no doubt that it has done much to draw down God's blessing on our country, where the true faith, after the bitter persecution it had sustained there for more than two hundred years, now flourishes in peace and prosperity. At the same time it naturally took a little time for the national feelings to get accustomed to such unusual things as religious houses; and Bishop Douglass mentions, in the diary above quoted, that "some of the gentlemen of Oxford" talked much against the opening and establishing of monasteries in England, and complained of the parade with which Miss Weld had been professed at Winchester, though "in truth," adds the Bishop, "there was not any parade on the occasion." Not a little curiosity was also shown on divers occasions about the members of these establishments, the whole system of the religious life being strange and mysterious to English eyes. As an example of this we will give another extract from the diary of the Vicar-Apostolic of the London district, which shows that a funeral of a nun openly performed after the Catholic Ritual was a bold measure.

Public feeling
in England
about
convents.

Funeral of
Lady Anne
Clavering.

"On the 8th of November (1795) died Dame Anne Clavering, Lady Abbess of the late Monastery of Pontoise, about half an hour after 12 o'clock at noon, in the convent, Hammersmith. The next day I appointed and consecrated a part of the garden for a burying-ground, and she was buried in it on the 10th, viz., the Tuesday afternoon, in the manner prescribed by the Ritual. The nuns walked before, two by two, then followed the Rev. Mr. Lee in surplice and stole, the corpse next, supported by the lay-sisters. Mr. Gomme's men attended. Mr. Bonham's (the Cupola House) windows were crowded with spectators."

Our school at Preston went on well, Dame Benedicta being assisted in her teaching by Miss Lucas (who had accompanied the community from Ghent, and intended joining

* Afterwards united into one community.

it as soon as she was old enough) and one or two other young ladies, the nuns being at that time very few in number.

In the Lent of 1796, the change of offices being due, it was held as usual, and Dame Frances Hesketh was chosen Prioress, retaining also her former office of Depositary. No Novice-mistress was appointed, as this office did not seem likely to be required at present; and for the first time there was no election of either Portress or Thourier, these two duties being attached to regular inclosure, which (as before stated) was not observed at Preston.*

1796.
Suspension of
the Offices of
Portress and
Thourier.

Thus the quiet months passed on in the temporary convent at Preston. The round of daily life was as much like that lived at Ghent as our sisters could make it, but the absence of inclosure and the near vicinity of the streets of an English town must have been in some ways a painful exchange for the perfect retirement of the Ghent monastery with its exclusively Catholic surroundings. The spirit of prayer, however, and that of charity to the poor—always cultivated in our community—seem to have remained unbroken; with regard to the latter, we would observe that it is edifying to find that in the midst of the great poverty at Preston, there never passed a month without some few shillings being bestowed upon the poor at the door, as the entries in the account book testify. Their own living was poor enough. Tea—more expensive then than now—was an unheard of luxury, the nuns being satisfied with the herb-beverage known as “balm-tea.”* Wine, too, was seldom seen except in the guest-room. Poverty.

At the beginning of the year 1797, the Lady Abbess received a letter of good wishes from Brother Antony Oswald, an ex-Jesuit lay-brother well-known to our community, who was at that time residing in Ghent, in which she read a melancholy description of the spiritual desolation of good Catholics in Flanders. This letter being of some interest, we offer it to our readers. The broken English in which it is expressed, is sufficiently explained by the fact that the writer was a German, although attached to the English Jesuits.

1797.

“Ghent, 17th January, 1797.

“Hon’d. Madame,

These humble begs the accepting my sincerest wishes, together with your worthy family, as also to my other friends for a happy new-year both for your spiritual and temporal welfare, &c. I need say no more, being confident your ladyship is informed of our afflicted contery and all our misfortunes, being not only deprived of all our necessities for life, but also of all our spiritual comfort. All convents and their churches, of both sexes are abolished, and the poor Religious people turned out in the Street, without any money or cloathes, or any assistance whatever; no pensions paid, not onely to the former suppressed. Seven parish churches are left us, alas! God onely knows how long. I dare say no more at present of our afflicted condition; on this subject it suffice to condole with your friends.

Ghent under
the Republic.

* In these days, it being only partly re-established, the duties of portress are sufficiently performed by a lay-sister, who, being exempt from the Divine Office, is more at liberty to attend to the demands on her time which the absence of strict inclosure has so much multiplied.

* The first entry in the accounts of tea for the community occurs in the autumn of 1802.

1797.

Dame Sales
Eldridge.

The community at Velsique is also suppressed; our two friends* are taken care off by their two nurses who attended them in that house; they taken them with them to their parents untill farther orders or change of time. Dm. Sales has had lately one of her fits, but is now quite well and enjoys wonderful good health. Miss Lamb grows very fatt, but always very innocent. I never yet mentioned the death of the father to the former; her dear parents have never wrote to her since her father's death; they contriv'd to send their accounts to Mr. Eldridge by one of their acquaintance, and got their pention for both for one year; they told me they had sent a second time their accounts, to whom or by whom I know not, therefore I don't middle with it, as she was sent their without cloaths. I apply'd ones [once] with the mother to Mr. friseau, who paid for her 30 crowns, which are put to your account. Madame, with these you will receive a Bill of Exchange from the children of Mr. Corn* Bosschaerts. Their father and mother being dead, they being onder their gardianship who inspect their books, find an articul for two pieces of cloth due from March 20 -1794—viz: florins cur^t 135 ,, 6 ,, 8 English £ ster: 10 ,, 13 ,, 6—I asked Mr. friseau to pay this small bill, but no money can be had from him; and in the present situation I am in, cannot afford to pay so small a sum. The bill drawn on you is sent to Mr. Wm. houghton at Manchester. I hope madam you will pardon me, as I have no other way of paying your little bill. My landladies in duty with me, humble recommending myself to all our good friends remain with due respect.

Hon'd. Madame,

Ever your most dutiful oblig'd servant.

ANT. OSWALD."†

June 18.
Death of Lady
Magdalen
Arden.

In the summer of this same year occurred our first death in England, and it was that of the Lady Abbess herself. She was attacked by a violent fever on the 16th of June, and so rapid were its effects that she expired on the 18th without being able to receive the Holy Viaticum, owing to the delirium with which the fever was attended; she had, however, received Holy Communion the day before she was taken ill, and Extreme Unction was administered before her death.

So sudden a loss was a great blow to the community, though they were not unprepared for it as the Lady Abbess had long been in very poor health and did not seem to promise a long life, her constitution having been much broken by the anxiety and hardships of the last few years. She was not however advanced in age, being only sixty when she died.

June 30.
Death of
Dame Baptist
Farrar.

The Lady Abbess was followed to the grave within a fortnight by Dame Baptist Farrar, whose death was also sudden. She attended Matins as usual on the night of June the 27th, and the following morning was found in a lethargy from which she never recovered consciousness. She expired on the 30th. The most painful circumstance attending these deaths was the necessity of having the body interred in the Protestant

* Together with Dame Sales Eldridge, a Miss Lamb was being nursed by the nuns of Velsique. She appears to have likewise been a subject of interest to our community, and was probably an old pupil.

† Brother Antoine Oswald was a German lay-brother of the English Province of the society, which he had entered in 1751. After the suppression he made himself very useful in looking after the affairs and the property of the ex-Jesuits. He also rendered good service in the same way to our community, as the above letter testifies, and occasionally visited Dame Sales and Miss Lamb. He died at Hamburg in 1799, aged 76.





LADY FRANCES HESKETH.
(13th Abbess).

graveyard. The funeral service at that time could only be performed within doors, and the coffin was then borne to the public cemetery.

1797.

The election of Lady Magdalene's successor was the next thing to be thought of, and Bishop Gibson, on being applied to, deputed the Rev. Antony Lund and the Rev. John Lund to preside in his place at this ceremony, which took place on the 17th of July. The Chapter, which consisted of only ten persons, elected Dame Frances Hesketh Abbess; and at the change of offices which necessarily followed soon after, Dame Placida Jones was made Prioress in her stead. The Lady Abbess continued for some time to fill herself the duties of the Procuratrix.

Lady Frances
Hesketh,
thirteenth
Abbess.

The Abbatial Benediction took place on the 19th of September. It was performed by Bishop Gibson in the chapel at Cloughton, and was an event of great interest to the proprietors of the neighbouring estate, the Brockholes, who were bound to the new abbess by ties of blood and friendship.

Her
Benediction.

It was at about this date that the community first received the boon of a resident chaplain. Fathers Dunn and Morgan, of St. Wilfrid's, had been very kind, but a priest who had no other duties than to give his attention to the religious and their pupils was indeed an advantage. Dr. Gibson now found himself in a position to arrange this, and he appointed a young priest, the Rev. Robert Blaco, to the post. He had been a student of Douay College, and had shared with a number of others the imprisonment at Dourlens, from the middle of October to the 24th November, 1793, when, in company with three others, he succeeded in escaping. He did not, however, come off quite so well as his fellow fugitives, for it is related that when his turn came to descend the rope by which they were climbing from the ramparts of the citadel he slipped, and he had a fall which injured his leg. The others hastily carried him to a neighbouring cottage, whose owners gave him such kind attention that he was soon sufficiently recovered to start on his journey to England.* In due time he entered at the new college of Crook Hall, the predecessor of Ushaw, and was ordained priest not very long after. He was our first chaplain in England, and served the convent well for thirteen years. In the midst of their poverty, our sisters could only give him the small salary of £15 per annum, and rented for his use a room in the adjoining house for the modest sum of £5 yearly.

On the last day of the year, 1797, the Lady Abbess informed the Chapter that the superior of the French community of Montargis, which had of late years taken refuge in England, asked to make a contract with ours for prayer for the departed members of both houses. All agreed to the terms of the contract, which expressed that two Masses should be said, and the good works of a week offered up by each member for every deceased sister of the other community. This agreement is kept up to this day, both by ourselves and the nuns of Princethorpe, the successors of the convent of Montargis.

December 31.

Contract with
the nuns of
Montargis.

Early the following year, our community lost another member; Dame Xaveria Boone had been in feeble health for some twelve months past, owing to a stroke of paralysis. On Christmas day, 1797, she was seized with a relapse and was both speechless and insensible during the few days that she survived, so that she was only capable of receiving Extreme Unction. She expired on the eve of Epiphany, 1798.

1798.

January 5.

* See the Rev. B. Ward's "History of St. Edmund's College," page 84.

1798.

November 24.

Deaths.

The next to die was Dame Clare Throckmorton, who had kept her jubilee six years before leaving Ghent, and had reached a very advanced age; she sank under her infirmities in the November of the same year, and was followed in six weeks by Dame Anselm Tempest, who was but forty-four years old, but had been a constant invalid during the whole of her religious life. For the last two years she had suffered from an internal complaint which at last ended fatally. She died on the 3rd of January, 1799.

1799.

February.

The choir nuns were now reduced to the number of seven, and the prospects for the future, would have been dark enough had not God in His goodness begun to send them some vocations. Mrs. Bedingfeld, of York,—Dame Benedicta's mother—introduced to our sisters a young convert lady, Miss Hall, who wished to give herself to God in holy religion; and as Miss Lucas also persevered in the same wish and was now thought old enough, it was arranged that they should enter the novitiate together. This was early in 1799, and at the change of offices which followed soon after, Dame Benedicta was elected Mistress of Novices. There was something cheering in starting a novitiate again, and the two postulants were very promising. Sister Bernard Lucas was an innocent girl who had never known the contagion of the world and was full of piety, while her companion, Sister Clare, grateful for the double grace of the true faith and the religious vocation, was noted for her earnestness in the pursuit of spiritual things. They were clothed together in the May of 1800, and about the same time were joined by another postulant, Sister Aloysia Jefferson. The following year the two novices were elected for profession, but that of Dame Bernard (probably on account of the unsatisfactory state of her health) was deferred six weeks. Dame Clare was professed on the 6th of May and Dame Bernard on the 24th of June.

1800.

First professions in England.

1801.

M. Fryson again.

During the year 1801, the Lady Abbess received several letters from M. Fryson, the tenant of the old house at Ghent, informing her that the Republican Government was suing him for the 1200 louis which he owed to our community (for he had never paid a farthing of his debt), on the ground that a public decree of the "Régie du Domaine National" had recently declared all the houses abandoned by religious communities to be Government property; hence the officials declared him bound to pay to them the value of the premises under pain of forfeiting them, in which case they would be sold to the profit of the Government. Fryson, who was not anxious to discharge his debt to one party any more than another, wrote to the Lady Abbess requesting her to appeal, through the British Ambassador or Deputy, to the Congress of Amiens which had just met to negotiate a peace, in the hope that the officers of the "Régie" might be prevailed on to desist from their pursuits. He based his petition on the plausible ground that the 1200 louis were really due to the nuns, who, he thought, would be willing to make an effort for the recovery of their rights. But it seemed very questionable whether our sisters would really be indemnified even if the Government let Fryson alone, so the Lady Abbess naturally took no notice of his importunity. However, during the course of that year, religion being restored by law throughout the French dominions by the Concordat between the Pope and General Bonaparte, some of the Ghent friends of the community began to hope to see them return to the old monastery,* and our sisters

* The only one of the exiled communities which returned to its former home was that of the Augustinians at Bruges, which still flourishes on the spot of its foundation.

received such friendly letters from their former neighbours that they began at last to meditate an attempt at recovering the value of their property at least in part. The Consular Government had succeeded the French Directory, and matters had become much quieter and better ordered on the Continent, so that there seemed to be some hope of obtaining their rights. They decided first to try negotiating with Fryson, rather than incur the risks and disagreeables of going to law. The Lady Abbess accordingly looked for some one who would act for the convent in the matter, and she had the good fortune to find one who was willing to exert himself to the utmost in their behalf. This was the Rev Thomas Barrow, an ex-Jesuit of the Liège Academy, who was in 1801 actually residing in Liège, where he was looking after some of the property of his Order, and doing what he could also for that of the English Sepulchrines, formerly of that town. The latter community are now resident at New Hall, in Essex, where they had just settled at the time we are speaking of. Mr. Barrow showed himself most obliging in taking the Ghent affairs to heart, and had several interviews with Fryson and also with M. de Smedt, a notary of the town who was well acquainted with our sisters. M. de Smedt was of opinion that the whole contract with Fryson was null and void, since according to Church law, no number of individual nuns, and no superior, had it in their power to dispose of community property without an act signed by the whole chapter. His advice was that Fryson should be prosecuted for having taken possession of the house. But this was a matter which required consideration. It was certainly true that in a Catholic country where the Canon Law of the Church was recognised, M. de Smedt's theory would be received as correct; and as the sale of the monastery had been effected before the Republican Government had possession, and consequently before the old laws were abolished, it might hold good in theory; but in practice, the French Republicans were not likely to trouble themselves about the rights of a religious chapter, so it seemed useless to insist upon them. On the other hand, it might be advanced that the intention of Lady Magdalen had not been to sell, but rather to let the property, which she had more right to do than to dispose of it altogether. Fryson, however, always maintained that it had been sold to him, though he certainly had never paid anything for it. He seems to have been a man of no principle, and he showed a marvellous coolness to his creditors. This coolness seemed to have reached a climax when he requested Mr. Barrow to send the nuns a bill of the expenses he incurred in his journey to Amiens, whither he had gone in the hope of obtaining protection from the pursuits of the "Régie" for the 1200 louis. "Vendors," said Fryson, "ought to secure the purchasers from oppression."

1801.
Communi-
cations with
Ghent.

Negotiations
about the
Ghent
property.

Mr. Barrow was able to trace some of the community property, but it was not so easy to let them have it. He informed them that the marble altar of the chapel was still in the keeping of the sculptor; Fryson had attempted to get it, calling it his property, but M. Portois would not give it up. The great relics of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica had been taken to the Béguinage, but Mr. Barrow was of opinion that though he might succeed in getting them from thence, he would not be allowed by the government regulations to send them to England. Of their friend Miss Ackerman, Mr. Barrow gave very pleasing accounts. He was quite charmed to have made her acquaintance, and spoke of her in the highest terms. But he told them that the reverses of the country had given her much to suffer, even since the recent death of her father, and she was reduced

1802.

1802.

to straitened circumstances, and being looked upon as a suspected person was under the surveillance of the law. This was indeed the case, and to such an extent that when writing to her old friends in England she dared not sign the letters with her name, and begged the nuns to send their answers to the address of her cousin, Mademoiselle Dumont.

1802-4.

A further description of the state of affairs in Ghent is to be found in one of the letters received from old friends about this time. Although dated from London, it is evidently from a friend who was Flemish, probably visiting England. In this case the absence of signature could not have arisen from any perilous situation, but we may conclude from the context that the writer was very well known to the community, and sure to be identified. The sheet of paper is closely covered with writing, and no space left for the name. The letter runs as follows:—

“London, Mai the 7th, 1804.

“Madam,

letter from a
Ghent friend.

“I am indeed very glad to learn by your letter of the 23th April and by Mr. Woodlock that you and all the ladies of your commun^y are in good health, and that you have a large school, of which I make you my heartty felicitations. Your late neighbours and the greatest part of the inhabitants of Ghent were very sorry when you left that city, on account of the young ladies' education, &c.

“Concerning your convent: Mr. Frison has met a great deal of trouble since the French are in our country, but being provided (as it seems) of the right transactions, he has kept it for his own property and instead of diminishing these premises, he has rather better'd them.

“From Mr. De Smedt's house to the corner of the street, the front part of your convent is changed in seven different dwelling houses, which are all lett, besides the chappel and the garden, the latter being to a gardener and the chappel is for a magazin to a gentleman, who deposes into it marble and other articles. The yearly revenue of the whole I suppose amounts to £150 sterl.; but the impositions are high and I must observe you that he has spent a great deal of money in order to bring all those houses in perfection and repair. Mr. Frison keeps for his own use and for a manufactory the large building and deals in white lead which he grinds in it; for that purpose he has constructed a wind-mill, which is exactly placed on the top of its roof, it being thus the highest mill in Ghent.

offers of
assistance.

“Now is the case to know whether you have sold your convent with or without any restriction, and if you are duly provided with the right papers in your favor, then there will not be the least fear to lose a penny; because Mr. Frison (who I suppose is an honest man) is at present a rich man, having got several successions since your departure. As to send a letter to Mr. De Smedt (who is still living) would be fruitless, is to be supposed the more, because you did not receive a satisfaction at the time of peace, and considering we are now at war, silence will be strictly observ'd; but in a view of obliging you, I am willing of charging myself with your commission or procuration when I'll go home, and before that time I'll let it you know unless you are desiring that firstly you wish to have an interview with me to give a full explanation of all your affairs, which will be easier to act in consequence and for that purpose, it should be necessary that I undertake a private journey to Preston, you may depend upon my

1802-4.

strictest discretion of all what you'll communicate to me, and I feel enough how painful it is to have business abroad a agreeable to meet a faithful person willing to oblige & to whom you may open your heart.

"Probably you have been inform'd that all the other Abbeys, Convent & Congregations have been suppress'd by the French; a good many of the members died afterwards by meer grief, seing their property sold and taken down. I am sure that if you came to Ghent you should not recollect the city, it being extremely changed. Mess^{rs}. Goethals, Coppieters, Ghysens and Sartel, Monks of St. Peter's Abbey are dead, the latter died besides Mr. Huybrecht, pastor of St. Bavon, at the Island of Cayenne, who both have been transported thither by order of the French Government. Mess^{rs}. De Vilder, Van royen, Soor and Vanderbeken Chan^{es} of St. Bavon are dead too, besides the Provincial Pater Minne, the Guardian of the Recollects and a good many others. Mr. Castel San Pietro is still at Vienna,—the Abt. Vandevelde of St. Peter's arriv'd from his emigration in Ghent in the year 1802, and lodges at his Brother's house. The Arch Bishop of Malines came back from his emigration in 1796: and since has been sent to Germany by order of the French Government and replaced in 1802 by a Frenchman. The Prince Lobkowits late Bishop of Ghent died in Germany and has been also replaced by a French one,* whose Installation I saw before I came to England. The Cathedral of St. Bavon and all the other Parochial Churches are in their former situation at the exception of that of our Blessed Virgin Mary which is entirely taken down.

State of Ghent.

"Mr. Roosen father is very well, his daughter, Miss Krin, Burne, Bess, Poelman, my she cousin Beydens and all the Ladies Speelman your late pensioners are all married. Miss Ackerman and Verhulst are in good health, besides my own mother, my stepfather and stepsister Sophie Claes. We often talk of you, not being without hope to see you again, perhaps sooner than you think.

Old friends.

"Please to assure of my respects the Ladies of your respectable Society, and notwithstanding your infirmity, I hope you'll be able to come with them to your former residing place and see your late friends.

"Meanwhile I remain with respect and esteem."

Through other letters our sisters heard the fate of some of the public buildings. The Evêché was turned into the "Palais de la Préfecture," and the venerable Cistercian Abbey of Boudeloo into the "Ecole Centrale." The news of Dame Sales Eldridge continued to be fairly satisfactory. The sisters of Velsique had repurchased their house and returned to it; they took Dame Sales to visit Ghent once a year.*

Letters from Flanders.

At the time of which we are writing, however, our sisters had no intention of returning to Ghent, although some of their friends there were still hoping to see them back. They had met with kind benefactors in England, and their school—a great

* Etienne Faillot de Beaumont, who was born at Avignon, in 1750, was Bishop of Vaison before the Revolution. In 1801 he resigned his see in consequence of the Concordat, and was named, the following year, to that of Ghent by Bonaparte, who in 1807, had him transferred to Piacenza, and afterwards to the Archbishopric of Bourges. He had merited all these translations by his unswerving fidelity to the Emperor, whose cause he appears to have preferred to that of the Church.

* Some of the letters received by our convent from Flemish friends were somewhat curiously addressed, the geography and customs of England not being always understood by foreigners. Thus we see on the backs of these letters—"Messieurs Hesketh, Chapel Street, Preston."—"Mrs. Hesheh, Chapel Street, Preston, Lancashire, Londre."—"Mrs. Bedingfelt, Mr. Heskithy's, Chapel Street, Preston."

1802-4.

acquisition to English catholics at that period--was prosperous. And it was a satisfaction to be able to live in their native land, while political affairs on the continent could not even yet be called in a settled state. Still they were not satisfied to give up their old monastery without receiving a penny for it, and they continued to correspond with Mr. Barrow and M. de Smedt on this subject. At last, in the month of February, 1803, they were persuaded by the latter to decide upon attempting to force Fryson by law either to give up the house or to pay the money mentioned in the contract. A Capitular Act to this effect, drawn up by M. de Smedt, was accordingly signed by the members of the Chapter and forwarded to his address in Ghent. The document, however, miscarried, and a year and a half later the notary, on being again applied to, expressed his surprise that it had never reached him, but added his opinion that the law proceedings had better now be postponed until the wars in which France was engaged were over, as all was in confusion, and it might prove impossible to get justice done; so there the matter ended for a time. As to Fryson, after a long struggle with the government officials, he was at last compelled to pay the value of the house to them; so our community, after being defrauded for some years by a private citizen, was finally robbed of its rights by the French Government.

Death of
Dame Bernard
Lucas.

We now resume our chronicle. Dame Bernard Lucas, whose profession we have alluded to, seemed only to have made her vows for heaven, for she early fell into consumption, and, after a lingering illness, expired on the 16th of March, 1802, before the first anniversary of her profession had come round. Her place was filled, however, by Dame Aloysia Jefferson, who was professed on the 8th of May following. She was a pleasing, lady-like and well-educated person, of great value in the school, where she was very early put into the first place. This left Dame Benedicta at liberty to fill other offices, which was useful enough at that time when the numbers were so low, and we find that at one time she filled the posts of Mistress of Novices, Celleraire, and Procuratrix or Depositary at once. In the first of these she appears to have been much liked; Dame Clare Hall, the first whom she professed, used to speak of her with enthusiasm. In the office of Procuratrix, she was continued by dispensation after the usual term of six years had expired, there being few in the community at that time who were as skilful in the management of business.

The novitiate at Preston once it was started was seldom empty, and the increase of the community, though slow and gradual, was steady. Dame Stanislaus White succeeded Dame Placida Jones as Prioress; the latter was feeling the effects of her age, and Dame Stanislaus was a person who was able to give an example of punctuality and exactitude very valuable in that office, which she held by dispensation for twelve years consecutively.

1804.

On the 7th of September, 1804, the venerable Sister Scholastica Rimmer died at the age of eighty-two. She was a jubilarian of several years' standing, and had seen a long religious life at Ghent. Belonging to an interesting old family of the Lancashire yeomanry class, and having several relatives and connexions priests, Sister Scholastica was one of those privileged souls who seem to have imbibed the spirit and traditions of the faith from a long line of ancestors. Her life as a lay-sister was innocent and laborious, her labours relaxing only when old age rendered her incapable of them. She died of the effects of a paralytic stroke which had deprived her of speech for a week previously.

She was the first of those who died in England to be buried in a Catholic graveyard for she was taken to Fernyhalgh, where the Rev. Antony Lund, who was extraordinary confessor to our community, had opened a new chapel in 1795, only a few fields distant from the old Chantry at Ladywell. The Chantry of Ladywell or Our Lady's Well dates from the 13th or 14th century, but in the reign of Edward VI., it was dismantled, though it appears probable that Mass continued to be said either on the spot or in a house close by throughout the days of the Penal Laws, while the customary devotions at the well, from which it takes its name, were never discontinued. In fact so intensely catholic was this neighbourhood that comparatively few protestants lived there. Our nuns were very fortunate in securing so interesting and so devout a spot for the burial place of their sisters, and four of the community were interred there in succession.

On the feast of the Purification, 1805, Dame Gertrude Howe was professed for the choir.

The following year, in the month of April, the Lady Abbess Frances Hesketh kept her golden jubilee. The event was celebrated with much rejoicing, and with as much festivity as the means of the community would allow. And certainly, a little outlay on such an occasion was very justifiable, for Lady Frances, besides being an admirable superior and clever woman of business, had rendered very substantial assistance to the necessities of the community. Her brother, Mr. James Brockholes, who died in 1783, had left her by his will a pension of £60 per annum, which was to be increased to £100 in the event of the dissolution of the monastery which was much apprehended at that time, in consequence of the Emperor Joseph's arbitrary measures. The dissolution of the monastery took place from other causes twelve years later, and Dame Frances became possessed of this handsome annuity. During the earlier part of the residence at Preston, the community being penniless, each member had to live on the bounty of her friends, but Dame Frances, with a truly public spirit, gave up for common use almost the whole of her pension, reserving only what the circumstances of the time rendered absolutely necessary for herself, and a certain sum to be given in charity. By this act Lady Hesketh led the way to an act of renunciation on the part of the community of the small pensions which they had hitherto been allowed to receive from their friends, which has been already alluded to, and by which we may thankfully recognise that poverty is better observed amongst us than formerly.

On the 4th of September following we lost Dame Placida Jones, who also had lately kept her jubilee. This excellent religious had always suffered from weak health, and had now for some time (though little over seventy years of age) been in a lingering decay. She was able to receive the last sacraments and died happily. She was buried at Fernyhalgh.

The school continued to be almost the only source of income to the community at Preston, and it was well that it flourished as it did, for the household expenses and the rates and taxes (including at that time the window-tax) were very high. Amongst the pupils of the early part of the 19th century we meet with the names of Shuttleworth, Forster, and Eccles, afterwards to be found as members of the community; also with those of Talbot,* Singleton, Brockholes, Livesley, Parker and other well-known families.

* Two Miss Talbots, sisters of John, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury, were educated at Preston.

1808.

On the 18th of October, 1808, Dames Teresa Shuttleworth and Mary Bernard Wareing were professed. Not long after this, the Lady Abbess began to show the effects of age and infirmity, and at last was quite confined to her bed from a general failing or decay which rendered her helpless. Every care and attention was lavished upon her, and the limited means of the community were strained to the utmost in her behalf, although it was plain that no cure was to be expected.

1809.

Another profession was received in the October of 1809, in spite of the sinking state of the Lady Abbess. Dame Agnes Carr, a native of Preston, and a former pupil in the school, made her vows; and on the 24th of the following month, Lady Frances Hesketh passed away, after receiving all the rites of Holy Church. Father Blaco and the community were kneeling round her to the last, in deep grief at their loss. She was buried at Fernyhalgh, and the pious visitor at this interesting church may still see the white marble tablet put up to her memory by Mr. Fitzherbert Brockholes. The inscription runs as follows:—

November 24.
Death of the
Lady Frances
Hesketh.

“Here lie the remains of Catherine M. F. Hesketh, daughter of Wm. Hesketh, of Mains, Esq. She was 13 years Abbess of the English Benedictine nuns, late of Ghent in Flanders, and departed this life at Preston, Nov. 24th, 1809, in the 81st year of her age and the 54th of her religious profession. This Monument was erected to her memory by the gratitude of Wm. Fitz Brockholes Esq.

“REQUIESCAT IN PACE.”

Her virtues.

She will long be remembered amongst us for her virtues and talents, and the poor in Preston and its neighbourhood had reason to lament her death, for she had been remarkable for the kind interest she took in them, often working for them with her own hands when too infirm for more active duties. We read in her death-bill that she was a great promoter of the devotion still in use amongst us, of the Seven Saturdays in honour of Our Lady of Dolours for a happy death.

December 14.

The 14th of December was the day fixed for the election of her successor, and Dr. Gibson appointed to preside in his place the Rev. Robert Blaco, chaplain, and the Rev. Antony Lund, extraordinary confessor of the convent.

Lady
Benedicta
Bedingfeld,
fourteenth
Abbess.

Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld was the Abbess elect. She was the eldest daughter of Edward Bedingfeld, Esq., of York, younger brother of Sir Richard Bedingfeld, of Oxburgh, 4th Baronet. Having been professed at Ghent in 1775 when very young, she was now about fifty-two years of age. Of her solid religious qualities we have already spoken, and the only drawback to her appointment was the unsatisfactory state of her health, for she had been for some time suffering from a series of chronic complaints. At the time of her election she was actually holding the offices of Dean, Mistress of Novices and Depositary, the last of which she had held ever since Lady Frances Hesketh resigned it in 1802. Her Benediction was deferred owing to the fact that the community was at that time contemplating a removal from Preston, and the site proposed for their residence was in another district. At the ceremony of the Benediction of an Abbess, the elect makes an oath of fidelity to her ecclesiastical superior, and it would of course be proper that this oath should be made to the Vicar-Apostolic of the Midlands, since it was in this district that our sisters contemplated settling. For some time before her death, Lady Hesketh had entertained this

Project of
removal.



LADY BENEDICTA BEDINGFELD.
(Abbess--Elect).

project, and its necessity was becoming daily more evident. The house in Chapel Street was not large enough to be a convenient abode for a community, especially with the addition of a school. Moreover it seemed to be the will of God that they should remain in England, as all attempts at recovering the Ghent property had failed, and as fresh members continued to arrive, the future had to be seriously considered and provided for. Of course it was desirable to buy an estate, as a lease is not a satisfactory thing for a religious community, and for some time past a subscription had been commenced to meet this expense amongst the friends who had already been so generous. The fine old Castle of Caverswall, near Stone, in Staffordshire, the property of the Hon. Booth Grey, brother of the Earl of Stamford, was for sale; and at the time of Lady Bedingfeld's election, our sisters had already entered into negotiations for its purchase. Its situation, surrounded as it was by a small freehold estate, was a desirable one, and its size appeared convenient. It had not been occupied for some time, and from all accounts was in a rather dilapidated state. A lawyer who lived in its neighbourhood, Mr. Walter Coyney by name, transacted the business of sale with the nuns in a very friendly manner, and aided by the generosity of their benefactors, the property was finally purchased for £4,000. The next thing to be done was to have the castle put into repair, and this, including the glazing, joinery, &c., came to £500 more, so bad a state had it been kept in. Mr. Jefferies, a master joiner of Stone, superintended most of this work. His grandson is employed by our community to this day.

We have seen that Lady Benedicta Bedingfeld had been elected Abbess in December, 1809, and was then in a suffering state of health. The following March found her considerably worse, which was very damping to the community just when their prospects were otherwise beginning to brighten. However she rallied again, and continued to attend to business for some time; but in September she quite broke down, and all began to feel seriously apprehensive about her. During this month, Sister Xaveria Hartley, a choir novice, was elected for her profession, but the ceremony was deferred, both on account of the Lady Abbess's illness, and because of the contemplated removal. 1809.
September.

However, it was desirable that the new property should be inspected, and as it was impossible for the Lady Abbess to go thither herself, she deputed the Prioress, Dame Stanislaus White, to undertake the journey, with Dame Aloysia Jefferson. They started in the month of November, and were hospitably received and entertained on their arrival by Mr. Coyney, the lawyer. During their stay, they wrote from time to time to the Lady Abbess, giving an amusing account of their impressions and proceedings. They were on the whole pleased, and returned in due time to communicate their gratification to their sisters. November.

The repairs at the castle went on satisfactorily, and the removal would have been looked forward to with eagerness but for the anxiety felt about the Lady Abbess's health. Truly our community, so small at that time, did not seem able to spare such a member as Lady Benedicta. For tried religious virtue she had not an equal amongst them, and for talent and aptitude to business only one or two very young nuns promised to resemble her, while their want of experience kept them as yet at a distance. But, as the author of the "Imitation" says, "Man proposes and God disposes," and so it was to be that Lady Bedingfeld, after making all the arrangements for removing to the new monastery, was to die without ever entering it.

1811.

After a tedious and lingering illness, she departed this life on the 27th of March, 1811, being Wednesday of the fourth week in Lent. Her last moments are described as truly edifying, and she had the special favour of receiving the Holy Viaticum only two hours before her death. She was buried at Fernyhalgh like her predecessor.

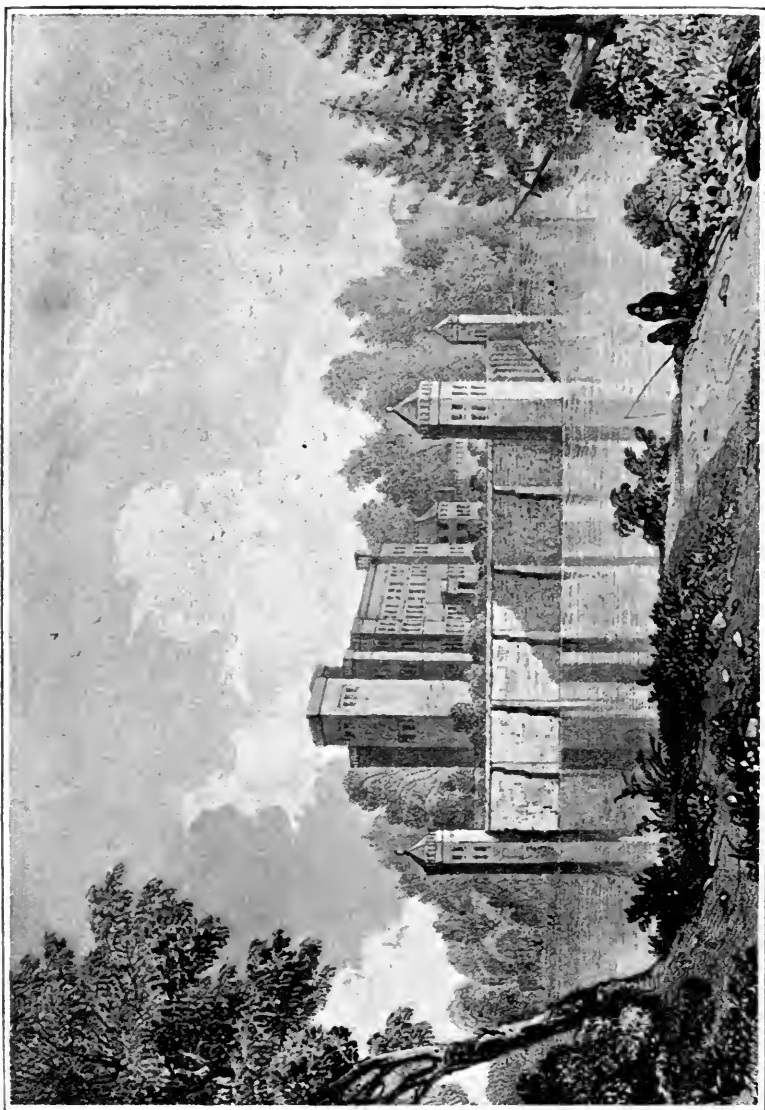
April 24.
Departure
from Preston.

Caverswall Castle being now ready to receive the community, the removal took place on the 24th of April, ten days after Easter. Many farewells were taken and many presents made to neighbours and tradespeople in Preston, and finally the journey was accomplished in "post-chaises." The nuns were accompanied by the Rev. James Norman, a French emigrant priest, as Mr. Blaco was needed for missionary work in his own district. Travelling at that time was rather expensive, and it may interest our readers to hear that these chaises which conveyed our community and their pupils from Preston to Staffordshire, cost them £41, while the removal of their baggage amounted to £80. A few days after their departure a sale took place of the larger furniture and such things as our sisters preferred not to take with them.

During the sixteen years residence at Preston the community had buried ten members, including three Abbesses and one lay-sister; all excepting one had been professed at Ghent. They had professed seven, six of whom came to Caverswall. Thus only four of the Ghent dames (but all the Ghent sisters except one) rejoiced in the sight of their first real monastery in England.







CAVERSWALL CASTLE.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

CAVERSWALL CASTLE.

A.D. 1811 TO 1853.

Caverswall Castle, near Stone, in Staffordshire, was erected in the reign of King Edward II. by Sir William de Caverswall or Careswell, Knight, and was built in the style usual at that time, being strong and well fortified. It was entirely of stone, and was originally surrounded by ponds, as well as a moat with a drawbridge. The moat still existed in 1811, as well as the stone turrets of octagon shape, which had been added for the further defence of the place. It had passed through many hands between its occupation by the first owner and that of our community. In the 19th year of Edward III. it was transferred from the Caverswalls to the Montgomeries; then in succession to the Giffords, Ports, and Hastings Earls of Huntingdon. In 1655 it belonged to Matthew Cradock, Esq.: after this it was in the hands of William, Viscount Vane, of Ireland, and finally it came to the Hon. Booth Grey, from whom it was purchased by our community. It is said that the monument of Sir William de Caverswall was formerly to be seen in the neighbouring church, with the following words:

“WILLELMUS DE CARSWELLIS.

Castri structor eram, domibus fossisque cœmento
Vivis dans operam; nunc claudor in hoc monumento.”

They have been translated thus:

“I built this Castle with its rampires round,
“For the use of the living, who am underground.”

Erdeswick, the great historian of Staffordshire, relates that the following lines were afterwards substituted:

“William of Careswell here lye I
That built this castle and pooles hereby.
William of Careswell here thou mayst lye,
But thy castle is down and thy pooles are dry.”

It was thought that the last two lines were added to attract the attention of the owner of the castle to its ruinous state, which was caused by the neglect of one Brown, the tenant and farmer of the neighbouring lands, who had perhaps purposely allowed the building to decay, for fear its lord should take up his abode there.*

The situation of the castle in the Midland district placed our community under the jurisdiction of the great Bishop Milner, who had succeeded Dr. Stapleton in its government

* See “Magna Britannia et Hibernia, 1730,” Vol. V., p. 99; also “Beauties of England and Wales,” by Rev. J. Nightingale, 1813, Vol. XIII.

1811.

in the year 1803. This was an advantage which they were not slow to appreciate, and we may number it among the many special marks of God's loving providence over our convent that He thus provided it with an Ecclesiastical Superior whose personal piety, enlightened wisdom and fatherly kindness were unsurpassed in any of the excellent prelates under whose jurisdiction it had hitherto flourished. Dr. Milner's name is still a household word amongst us, and many are the characteristic traits related of his zeal for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the community.

Community
in 1811.

The following are the names of the religious who arrived at Caverswall Castle, on the 24th of April, 1811.

Dame Stanislaus White, Prioress.

Dame Mary Joseph Molyneux, Second Dean† and Cellaraire.

Dame Clementina Adcroft, Chantress and Sacristan.

Dame Magdalene Gibson, Infirmarian.

Dame Clare Hall, Guardrobe.

Dame Aloysia Jefferson, Mistress of Pensioners

Dame Gertrude Howe.

Dame Mary Bernard Wareing.

Dame Teresa Shuttleworth.

Dame Agnes Carr.

Sister Xaveria Hartley, novice.

Sister Anne Joseph Eccles, postulant.

THE LAY-SISTERS.

Sister Frances Champ.

Sister Benedicta Tasker.

Sister Magdalen Edmonds.

Sister Aloysia Gillett.

Sister Martha Middlehurst.

Sister Winefride Hayes.

Sister Teresa Musché.

Sister Mary Joseph Ibison, postulant.

Helen Smith.

To these may be added Helen Smith, a girl of about seventeen years, who had lived with the community at Preston for some time past as servant and companion, accepting every year in place of wages a Mass said by the chaplain for her deceased parents. The nuns on their side provided her with food and clothing, while she made herself useful in many ways, one being the acting as companion to any who went out, which at Preston was frequently necessary. As soon as she was considered old enough, Helen entered as a lay-sister, and she is still remembered by the greater number of the present community as a cleanly, active and very laborious member, which qualities she retained even to her old age.

Several pensioners also accompanied the nuns from Preston, amongst whom was Miss Alice Forster, of Burradon, in Northumberland, who was destined to be one day a

† Lady Bedingfeld had held the offices of First Dean, Novice-mistress and Procuratrix before her election as Abbess, and these places had not been filled up.

1811.

prominent member of the community. The nuns who had been professed at Preston were delighted at the change from the crowded town house to the comparatively spacious residence of Caverswall Castle; but the Ghent nuns said that "the whole castle might stand in the refectory of Ghent." It was like the young Israelites after the Babylonian captivity rejoicing at the erection of the second temple, while the old men wept at the recollection of the first. It was but natural that the love of the old home where they had been professed should make some of our sisters use even exaggerated expressions, yet, nevertheless, the present change of abode was welcome to all. The impossibility of observing inclosure in England at that time had rendered residence in a town far from pleasant, and the nuns while at Preston were necessarily mixed up with their visitors, Catholic or Protestant, in a way which interfered more or less seriously with regular observance. But at Caverswall Castle the situation was itself secluded, having only a small village in the neighbourhood, and the community ventured to hope that some kind of partial inclosure might here be practicable. Of course no arrangements of any sort could be made without an Abbess, and to this important election all now turned their thoughts. Dr. Milner, on being applied to, deputed the Rev. Mr. Norman to preside at this ceremony in his place, and the 4th of May was accordingly fixed for it. The votes of the Chapter were centred upon Dame Aloysia Jefferson, one of the first of the members professed at Preston. We have already alluded to her capabilities, and the services she had rendered in the school. To these she added a sweet and attractive exterior with a gentle ladylike demeanour that made her a general favourite. But her nervous and timid disposition rendered her scarcely able to cope with the difficulties of superiority in a time of poverty such as the community then had to struggle with, and she was so keenly alive to this that she applied to Bishop Milner, and earnestly implored permission to decline the dignity which was being pressed upon her. To this, however, he would not consent, and he appointed the 4th of June for the solemn ceremony of her Benediction.

May 4.
Lady Aloysia
Jefferson,
fifteenth
Abbess.

A good sized room on the ground floor was now fitted up as a temporary chapel, and it continued to be used for this purpose about a year and a half, being converted into an infirmary sitting room afterwards, when the new chapel was built.

On the same ground floor there were several other spacious apartments, which were used as workroom, noviceship and Abbess's room respectively; the Abbess's cell being also close at hand. The pensioners were located entirely on the first storey, where they had their schoolroom, three large dormitories and other convenient apartments, including the mistress's cell. Their refectory, however, as well as that of the religious, was below ground on a level with the kitchen, which latter was a very large and fine one. The second storey of the castle contained rooms which were now turned into cells, one large one serving as lay-sisters' dormitory; some of the others were rather large for cells and not sufficiently numerous, so that two young nuns were often obliged to share one cell, an inconvenience to which in our present abode we are, happily, not subjected. The turrets on either side of the great gates were used respectively as a portress's lodge and a room for transacting business with seculars; the upper room in each served in the one case as a cell for the portress, and in the other as a guest-room, though the chief guest-house was one of the four turrets which flanked the walls of the castle, the

Arrangement
of the castle.

1811.

second of which (containing two rooms) made a convenient dwelling for the priest, while the third served as wash-house and laundry and the fourth as "St. Joseph's House," as the Depositary's store-house was, and still is, called. The guest-house, like that at Ghent, was dedicated to the Good Angels, and the walk leading to it was called the "Good Angels' Walk."

June 4.

On Whit-Tuesday, the 4th of June, Bishop Milner solemnly blessed the new Abbess, and he remained at the castle some time longer to make many necessary arrangements and hold a formal visitation. The day after the Benediction, he received the profession of Sister Xaveria Hartley, who had waited some eight months after being accepted by the community, owing to the circumstances in which it was placed at the time. Hers was apparently the first religious profession in the Midland District, and had been preceded by an unusually eventful novitiate. In after years she would allude jocosely to this, if any young nun thought herself roughly treated, and say—"Why, bless you, that is nothing! I was under three Abbesses in my noviceship!"

First
profession at
Caverswall.Renovation of
vows.

Now that the community was in a settled home, and able to carry out their rule more fully, the Bishop judged it suitable that they should make a solemn renovation of vows as a beginning of their new phase of religious life. This was accordingly done on the Friday in Whitsun-week, Dr. Milner himself presiding and receiving the vows, which were read aloud by Dame Agnes Carr, the youngest nun, and repeated by all the others. By his advice a clause was inserted after the mention of the vow of inclosure, in the following terms:—"in quantum hanc possibilem et expedientem esse in presentibus circumstantiis judicaverit dictus Episcopus ejusve successor."*

Dr. Milner's
regulations.

At his visitation, Dr. Milner made divers necessary and useful regulations. Without reviving the office of Thourier, he desired that a Guest-mistress should be appointed, who should see that the rules regarding strangers were carried out. They were not to be brought further into the convent than the guest rooms and chapel without leave from the Lady Abbess; but it was thought better for the present that she should have this leave in her hands, that she might allow visitors to be shown over the house if they wished it, as a contrary course might have had a bad effect in the anti-catholic state of England at that time.

With regard to the religious themselves, the Bishop fixed the General Inclosure to consist of their whole landed property, while the Particular Inclosure was to be solely the part within the moat, and beyond this no one was to go without a companion. At first he allowed the Abbess, with the consent of the Confessor, to permit the religious to go out of the inclosure, if some very urgent necessity should arise, and there was not time to apply to the Bishop himself. The state of the country, and the slow travelling and postage at that time, would explain the necessity for this permission.

Dr. Milner urged upon all the importance of observing the fasts and abstinences of the statutes as strictly as could be prudently done, and also of keeping up the choir with zeal, although he dispensed temporarily with the singing of the Conventual Mass and

* (Perpetual inclosure). "So far as the said Bishop or his successor shall judge it possible and expedient under the present circumstances." This clause we continue to insert in our vows to this day, as, although able to observe inclosure better at Oulton than even at Caverswall, we do not carry out the strict rules of Papal Inclosure, which, indeed, have not as yet been enforced in this country.

Office, as at the time this was impossible. He also exhorted all to the greatest exactitude in the observance of poverty, and it was by his advice that the private pensions hitherto allowed were renounced. The lesser details, such as the arrangement of time, &c., he placed in the hands of the Lady Abbess, in whose judgment he had the greatest confidence. The arrangement of time prescribed by the statutes, drawn up as it was for residence in another country, was found impracticable in England, and Dr. Milner judged it suitable that, in accordance with English custom, an early breakfast should be permitted instead of the half-past ten o'clock dinner, customary in Ghent, as elsewhere on the Continent in former times.

On the departure of the Rev. Abbé Norman who had acted as chaplain to the community only temporarily, Bishop Milner announced his intention of placing with them the Rev. Robert Richmond, a priest of no ordinary worth and whom he held in the highest esteem. He arrived in the following November, Mr. Norman remaining until then. The Rev. Mr. Badeley was appointed Extraordinary Confessor.

The change of offices had taken place a few days after the election of the Abbess, and Dame Clare Hall was elected to the vacant post of Mistress of novices; Dame Stanislaus White was renewed as Prioress by dispensation from the Bishop. The Lady Abbess herself retained the office of Depositary, which at that time was both a difficult and an unusually responsible one. She chose Dame Bernard Wareing as her aid, and her sound good sense and understanding of business rendered her very useful in this capacity, in which, of course, she took a larger part in the Depositary's duties than usually falls to the share of the aid.

On the 24th of June, the first clothing at Caverswall took place. It was that of June 24. Sister Anne Joseph Eccles, the postulant who had accompanied the community from Preston. The lay postulant, Sister Joseph Ibison, was clothed in September by Bishop Milner himself.

The school, which had been successfully carried on at Preston, received a new and better form at Caverswall. Dame Teresa Shuttleworth was nominated head mistress, and in this post she had the opportunity of displaying the talents of which she had always given promise. The school increased and developed under her care, and as it was almost the only one in the Midland counties for Catholic girls in the higher ranks of life, it soon became very full. A well-known priest, lately dead, has been known to say, "When I was a boy, in every family I knew, all the boys went to Sedgley and all the girls to Caverswall." As the community, though slowly increasing, did not grow in proportion to the school, it was sometimes difficult to arrange for the instruction of the classes, and at one time the Rev. Mr. Richmond was so good as to teach one for some months, for which his general information and excellent knowledge of French rendered him very efficient. He also rendered valuable service by giving instruction in French to some of the junior nuns. The School.

It may be of interest to our readers to see the prospectus drawn up for the school soon after the arrival at Caverswall, and inserted in the Laity's Directory.

"The Benedictine Ladies of Ghent, late of Preston, being now fixed in the pleasant and healthy situation of Caverswall Castle, near Stone in Staffordshire, educate young ladies on the following terms: for board, lodging and education, comprising the English Prospectus.

1811.

and French languages, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, the use of the globes, and plain and ornamental works, Thirty Guineas per annum, to be paid half-yearly in advance with One Guinea entrance-money. Tea, sugar, washing and books to be paid for apart. Music and dancing taught by the most approved masters, drawing by the ladies of the house, duly qualified. Each young lady is to bring with her two pairs of sheets, six hand-towels, four table-napkins, a knife, fork and silver spoon. The young ladies wear a striped cotton, printed for the purpose, as their common, and white muslin for their better dress. No vacations kept at the school, and notice of three months is expected previous to the removal of any scholar. The accounts of all extra charges will be transmitted to the parents or friends of the young ladies half-yearly. Letters addressed to Mrs. Jefferson.

"N.B.—Three coaches pass every day within a short distance of the castle, which run between London and Liverpool, thro' Leicester and the Staffordshire Potteries; also another coach between Chester and Derby passes within the same distance three days in the week. Stone, the post town, is the great thoroughfare for coaches from most parts of the kingdom, particularly for those which run through Birmingham and Wolverhampton. Upon previous notice a conveyance will be sent from the castle to bring the children from any of the neighbouring towns."

The reader will moreover be amused at the following description of the castle and its inmates written by the celebrated Mr. Pitt in 1817.* After giving the early history of Caverswall Castle already known to our readers, it proceeds as follows:—

"In the year 1811, a number of nuns who had emigrated from France and settled at Preston, in Lancashire, removed to Caverswall Castle as a more secluded place. 'This castle,' writes Mr. Pitt, which was sold by the Honourable Booth Grey to Mr. Brett, a banker of Stone in this county, was taken on lease by Walter Hill Coyney, Esq., of Weston Coyney, for the nuns,† and the sisterhood, amounting to sixteen in number,‡ with their confessor, came thither. This priest, who is a man of very agreeable manners, has taken much pains to convert several of the peasantry of the parish to the principles of Catholicism.§ His success, however, has not been commensurate to his zeal; when he has anything to bestow upon them they are mean and willing enough to receive it; but he has discovered that the majority of his converts come to the chapel in Caverswall Castle more for the hope of gain than the hope of salvation. In the meantime the nuns are sufficiently active in the good work of instructing young ladies in the principles of their faith, and they have at present about thirty pupils in progress. Their discipline is sufficiently strict; the pupils wear a uniform of buff-coloured cotton; they are not suffered to ramble beyond the bounds of the gravel walk which surrounds the moat and two or three small fields; they walk two and two like

* Staffordshire and Warwickshire past and present, by John Alfred Longford. (C. S. Mackintosh, 76, Tildesley, London.)

† There is an inaccuracy here. It is quite certain that the nuns bought Caverswall Castle, and it is generally believed in the community that they bought it from the Hon. Booth Grey through Mr. Coyney. On the other hand Mr. Brett's name is mentioned in connexion with the transaction by natives of Stone. Perhaps Mr. Brett had the castle on lease previous to its purchase by the nuns. But if so he could not have lived there, judging by the dilapidated state in which the community found it.

‡ In reality twenty-one in all.

§ This description probably refers to the Rev. Robert Richmond, as the Abbé Norman, who accompanied the nuns to Caverswall, remained there only a few months.

other boarding-school girls, and in their half-hour's exercise along the walks in the garden are required, as a religious duty, to utter their Ave Marias and Paternosters in a low voice.* The nuns themselves may be termed the Black Ladies. Their dress is entirely sable, with a long thick black veil thrown over the right shoulder. Their demeanour is grave, and they generally walk with a book in their hands; their countenances are pleasing and pensive; and if a man approach them, they turn away as if they feared the imputation of vanity."

As soon as the community was thoroughly settled in its new abode, all began to turn their thoughts to the erection of a convent chapel. The room temporarily used for the purpose was quite insufficient, especially as the Catholics of the neighbourhood, of whom there were a fair number, presented themselves on Sundays, being glad of the opportunity of hearing Mass within easy reach of their homes. Owing to the scarcity of missions in England at that time, it was not uncommon for persons to be frequently deprived of the benefit of Sunday Mass, and our sisters would have been sorry to refuse admittance to any one, but it was impossible for all to find place in the temporary chapel, so Lady Aloysia began seriously to consider the imperative necessity of raising an adequate building. The purse of the community, already drained to the utmost, seemed quite unable to meet this expense, but a subscription was begun amongst friends, which, it was hoped, would in time raise the required sum. They accordingly had an appeal printed and circulated early in the year 1812, which ran as follows :—

"The Benedictine nuns of Caverswall Castle relying on the charity of the benevolent venture to have recourse to their generosity on the present occasion.

1812.

Appeal in
behalf of a
Chapel.

"The chapel they now use is a small room in the centre of the house, and is not sufficiently large for the community itself. Very great, therefore, is the inconvenience which they experience on Sundays and other days from the Catholics in the neighbourhood who frequent their chapel. The congregation, indeed, at present is but small. Several, however, of these are obliged to remain out of the chapel; and many well-disposed persons are prevented from attending the services and instructions of our holy religion.

"Wishing to obviate these inconveniences and promote the glory of God by affording an opportunity of instruction to the many well-disposed, the Benedictine nuns are desirous of erecting a chapel adjoining to the house. They feel a regret in increasing the number of calls upon public charity; but on account of expences which they have lately incurred in purchasing their present situation, they are unable without assistance to accomplish the above desirable object.

"Humbly, therefore, confiding in that Providence which has hitherto favoured them, they have opened a subscription towards defraying the expences of the building. The smallest donation will meet with their warmest acknowledgments and prayers.

"Subscriptions will be received by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Milner, Great House, Wolverhampton; Messrs. Wright & Co., Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London; Messrs. Pedders, Newsham, Lomax & Co., Old Bank, Preston, Lancashire; the Rev. Messrs. Broomhead, Lupton and Kenyon, Catholic Chapels, Manchester; the Rev. Messrs. Fisher and Rigby, Liverpool; and Mrs. Jefferson, Caverswall Castle, near Stone, Staffordshire.

"Caverswall Castle, April 29th, 1812."

* This is probably an allusion to the custom in our school of saying the rosary walking in couples.

1812.

Subscriptions.

The noble-hearted Bishop immediately contributed £20; before the subscription was closed he had made donations to the amount of £45. Other friends came forward with their former generosity; our old benefactor, Mr. Brockholes, giving £25. We find other names of interest on the subscription list. Those who gave the most largely, besides the two whom we have named, were Miss Gerard, whose name is put down for £50, Lord Newburgh £20, Lord Clifford £20, Mrs. Weld £20, Mrs. Firth £160, and Mrs. Wheble £15, while the Rev. Mr. Tasker with his congregation collected £17 8s. Among the donors of smaller sums we meet with the names of Lady Scarsdale, Mr. Tempest, of Broughton, Mr. Shuttleworth, Mr. J. H. Whitgreave, Rev. T. Walsh (afterwards bishop), Sir Thomas Stanley, Mrs. Trafford and others.

Building of
the Chapel.

In the summer of 1812 the building of the chapel was commenced. It was situated between the great gates and the castle itself, so that externs would not be obliged to pass through any part of the convent to reach it. Catholic architects were not so plentiful in England then as now, and we may say that Bishop Milner himself designed the Caverswall chapel. We still possess the originals of ten letters written by him to Mr. Richmond during the summer months of 1812, in which he gives directions about every detail—pillars and pilasters, stalls, windows, altar-rails, &c. And these are accompanied by plans and sketches in ink. The style was to be Grecian, and it was well borne out in every feature, though in some parts cheap materials were used, and a good effect produced with comparatively little trouble. The expense was much lessened by the pulling down of the stables beyond the moat and using the stone of which they had been constructed.

Dr. Milner directed that the first stone of the new edifice should be laid by the Lady Abbess, and the second by the Rev. Mr. Richmond in his (the Bishop's) name, while the community recited the 131st psalm "Memento Domine David." The beautiful ceremony now in use for laying the foundation stone of a new church was probably unknown in England at that time.

Completion of
the Chapel.

The work progressed so well that the building (over which, by a somewhat singular arrangement, some new cells were constructed) was completed the same year, and was opened by Dr. Milner on the 26th of January, 1813. The total cost was only £724 14s., of which £590 18s. had been contributed by friends. The new chapel was devotional and convenient. The choir was small indeed as compared with our present one, but it was large enough to accommodate the community. The stalls were of the plainest deal, painted to resemble oak; there was only a single row on each side, and they were without kneeling-benches. The lay-sisters and pensioners were placed between the choir and altar-rails on either side respectively, and they knelt facing the altar. The stalls were interrupted on each side by a door communicating with the convent on one side and the sacristy on the other, so that the priest had to pass through the choir to reach the altar, an arrangement which would not be approved of nowadays. On the Gospel side of the altar a wing was thrown out for the accommodation of seculars, much in the same position as the seculars' part in our present church, and on the same Gospel side, near the sisters' benches was afterwards placed a small organ, as soon as the means of the community would allow them to purchase it. The beautiful tabernacle of tortoise-shell and silver, brought from Ghent, was placed on the altar, with which it corresponded

1813.

very well, having little Grecian columns on either side of the door with silver bases and capitals.

In these days the Caverswall Chapel would be thought humble enough, but at the time of its erection it was much esteemed, and indeed it was probably as good a conventual chapel as was then to be found in England.

To return now to our chronicle. In the summer of 1812 Dame Anne Joseph Eccles had been professed for the choir, and on the same day her sister (Sister Augustina) had been clothed as an oblate. This was the first and only instance in our community of the admission of an oblate or semi-religious. At that time when the modern active religious institutes did not exist, it was doubtless a kindness to receive in this way a person whose health did not permit her to undertake the full obligations of a Benedictine ; for this was the reason which made Dame Austin seek the state of an oblate. The nuns at Winchester had been in the habit of taking postulants thus from time to time, and Lady Aloysia procured from them the rules for oblates followed there. Dame Austin was professed in May, 1814.

Other subjects continued to be received regularly during these first years at Caverswall. Sister Mary Davies was professed in January, 1814, and on February the 3rd the same favour was granted to Dame Scholastica Roskell, the daughter of our late benefactors of Garstang. This religious will always be remembered as one of the most perfect models of religious life that it was ever our privilege to meet with, for she survived to a good old age, and her memory is still fresh amongst us. Even those who only knew her in her declining years and in a state of blindness (a trial with which God pleased to visit her for the last twenty years of her life) were always struck with the elevation of her character, and the beautiful religious simplicity and humility which she preserved to the end, although she had held offices of authority during the whole of her religious life, until her blindness rendered her incapable of them.

The next comer, Dame Etheldreda Bayliss, was a convert, well known to Dr. Milner and to the future Bishop, Dr. Walsh. She was full of fervour and earnestness, and had the privilege of entering the novitiate very young. She made her profession on the 24th of October, 1815, a few months after Sister Scholastica Barlow, a valuable lay-sister, who, like her namesake, Dame Scholastica, came from Garstang, where it was said that as children they had frequented the same school. Sister Scholastica was a very superior person, above the ordinary position of a lay-sister, and possessed of talents of no mean order, especially with regard to the study of medicine. When comparatively young the care of the distil-house was entrusted to her, and in this important department she laboured long and successfully, acquiring, by means of study and practice, so much knowledge and experience that she was at last equal to many a practising doctor, as one of our medical men asserted. She extended her charity beyond the community and school, and the poor in the villages of Caverswall and Oulton have reaped much benefit from her care and prescriptions.

Dame Etheldreda's profession had been followed the very next day by those of two more converse sisters—Sister Austin Smith and Sister Agnes Perkin. The former was the "Helen Smith" to whom allusion has been already made in these pages, and the latter came from the household of Mr. Vaughan, of Courtfield, where she had learned

1813.

1814.

Dame
Scholastica
Roskell.

Lay-sisters.

1814.

many useful things with which our lay-sisters at that time were not acquainted; amongst others the art of baking good bread. Our lay-sisters now numbered twelve, a higher number than we usually take, and, with one exception, no more were received for several years.

First death
at Caverswall.

But while the professions of new members were steadily proceeding, death was quietly working in the opposite direction. On the 20th of December, 1814, Dame Agnes Carr, the last professed at Preston, died of a violent attack of fever. She was only twenty-five years of age, and was thought to have weakened her constitution by her want of discretion in the pursuit of religious perfection. We cannot be certain if this was really so, but superiors took the alarm and became from that time more vigilant and careful not to allow fervour to degenerate into imprudence. Dame Agnes was the first to be buried in the Caverswall cemetery.

The following summer witnessed the deaths of two of the Ghent members within a few weeks of each other. Sister Anne Weardon died on the 10th of August, and Dame Clementina Adcroft on the 25th of the same month. The latter was not advanced in age, but had been in declining health for some time. Sister Anne, who was distantly related to her, was suddenly carried off by an attack of inflammation, which proved fatal in two days. She was a singularly holy soul, and it is said that Dr. Milner was so persuaded of this fact, that after her funeral he intoned the *Te Deum* over the grave, in the firm conviction that her soul was already in glory.

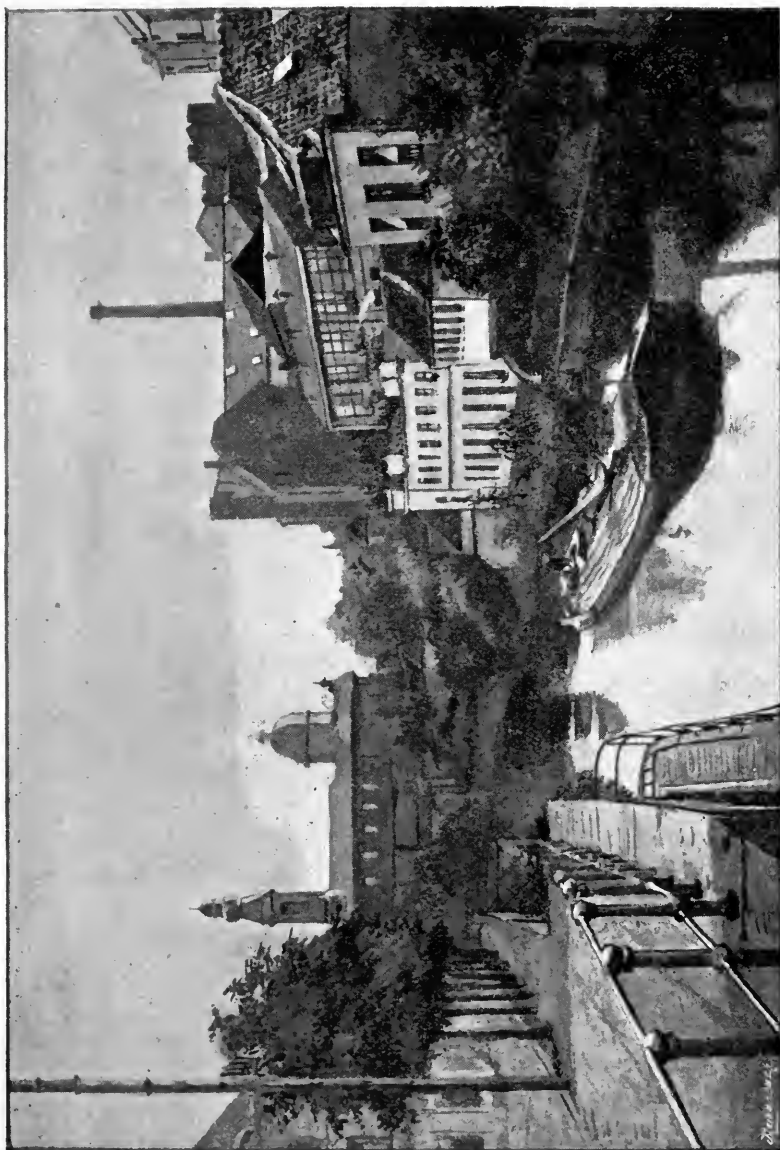
About the middle of the year, 1814, our community began again to make efforts at recovering their property in Ghent; indeed for a time they appear to have actually contemplated returning thither, which at first sight seems surprising now that they were located in a convenient dwelling. It may be accounted for, however, by the fact that only a few years before, a measure had been proposed in Parliament (and actually carried in the Commons) of instituting Government Inspection of the religious houses recently established in England. The bill had been thrown out by the Lords, but it was generally thought that it might be brought up again any day, and the inmates of these establishments were very apprehensive for some years of what would have been, if executed, almost insupportable; moreover the spirit of bigotry was still strongly manifested from time to time, and our sisters had a strong feeling that religious houses might at no distant period be declared illegal, in which case they would have no refuge unless they could succeed in recovering their former home, to which old traditions and the happy recollections of the past naturally drew their hearts.

1814-15.

Accordingly negotiations were actively set on foot. Mr. Barrow was just dead*; Miss Ackerman had been married for some years to her cousin, Captain Dumont, and had left Ghent. The person to whom our sisters applied for help was Mother Ann Clare Moore, Prioress of the English Austin Canonesses at Bruges. We have already alluded to the fact that this community alone, of the many English convents driven out by the French Revolution, had returned to its former abode, which the nuns had succeeded in re-purchasing at a higher price than they had sold it for; and as, during their brief residence in England, they had taken every opportunity of improving and modernising

Fresh
attempts at
recovering the
property at
Ghent.

* He died at Liège in the month of June, 1814, aged sixty-seven.



PRESENT VIEW OF THE ABBEY AT GHENT.

their system of English education, their school was now in a very flourishing state, and they were going on very satisfactorily.

Mrs. Moore held a lengthened correspondence with Dame Teresa Shuttleworth, who was Procuratrix at Caverswall, and entered with great energy into the scheme of recovering the lost property. She committed the undertaking to a gentleman whose children were being educated by her community, Mr. Van Hoobrouck de Moreghem, a descendant of the Mr. Louis Van Hoobrouck, who had had so large a share in the building of our monastery in the days of the Abbesses Eugenia Pulton, Mary Roper, and Mary Knatchbull. Mr. Hoobrouck de Moreghem went to Ghent where he soon found out our old friend Mr. de Smedt, and they made careful inquiries into the state of affairs as regarded our old monastery and Mr. Fryson's heirs, for Fryson himself was dead. Mr. de Smedt again asserted his former opinion that the contract signed at Antwerp was null and void; but since, on the strength of it, Fryson had been forced by the French to pay to them his debt, it appeared probable that our community would not be able to recover their house without making this good to his heirs. Moreover, the house was not in a fit state to return to. A portion of it had been divided so as to form two small houses which were let, while the main building had been used first as lead works, then as a factory for printing coloured cottons, and finally as a spinning manufactory, the machinery for which was set up chiefly in the underground part, so that the floors and walls had been pierced through. After all these metamorphoses it will be easily understood that repairs and alterations of a very expensive character must be gone through before it could ever again be used as a monastery. Indeed it was estimated that 12,000 francs (or about £500) would not be too much to cover this expense. The manufacturer who was actually occupying the place was a M. Poelman, who had a ten years' lease, and of course he would require compensation if he was asked to leave, and remove his machinery before the expiration of this term. Fryson's widow too (now Madame Meyer) demanded her share of compensation, together with the heirs, so that the expenses in prospect seemed likely to amount to a great deal. In spite of all these drawbacks the community (after much correspondence on the subject) decided to make an attempt at paying all that was asked, in the hope of being thereby entitled to the profits of the rents paid for the portions of the monastic buildings that were let as dwellings, and of the sale of their furniture which had been effected by Fryson. As regarded the repairs needed, Dame Teresa Shuttleworth told Mrs. Moore that only a small sum could be afforded towards them just then, but that the nuns were not contemplating an immediate removal, and if any sudden emergency should render that step necessary, they reflected that the sale of Caverswall Castle would furnish them with the means of doing all that was wanted, and would even cover any expenses that Mr. Hoobrouck might have advanced. Accordingly, a deed was signed in Chapter, investing M. Hoobrouck de Moreghem with full powers of attorney to act for the convent, and repurchase the Ghent house, by paying to the present owners all that they claimed. The deed was dated March 6th, 1815, but was not despatched till the 21st, our Holy Father's day. About this time, however, the nuns had received the tidings of Bonaparte's arrival in France from Elba, an event which excited the consternation of all Europe, beginning, as he did, with great success, to raise an army in the hope of once more mounting the

Resolution to
re-purchase
the Ghent
house.

1814-15.

imperial throne. Our sisters accordingly added a postscript to their letter, begging that M. Hoobrouck would venture nothing until it was seen what turn public affairs would take, as it would have been the height of rashness to spend all their money on the Ghent property with the chance of again losing all.

It is well known how the continental affairs turned out. The Hundred Days' Reign, as it was called, culminated in the Battle of Waterloo, and by the end of June Bonaparte's fate was sealed. In September, therefore, the negotiations about the Ghent house were renewed, but it was evident that Mr. Hoobrouck felt he was undertaking an affair that was likely to be neither successful nor even altogether desirable, and, through the medium of Mrs. Moore, he tried to dissuade our sisters from entertaining any further thoughts of returning to their old home. Religion, he said, was not prospering in the Low Countries, which were now under the dominion of Holland, and it seemed to him far more prudent that they should remain where they were. Mrs. Moore added persuasions of her own to the same effect. Accordingly their advice was followed, and the idea of returning was given up; but the wish was still entertained to sell the house at Ghent, that the community might at least receive what was due to them.

Project of
returning to
Ghent
abandoned.

Bishop Milner
at Bruges and
Ghent.

In the May of 1815, Mrs. Moore received a visit from Bishop Milner, who passed through the Low Countries on his way back from Rome. He also visited Ghent, where he inspected our old monastery with interest. The negotiations for its recovery had been carried on during his absence from England (which had lasted a year) and accordingly we do not hear of his having been consulted in the matter, though Mrs. Moore told him of the efforts she had been making in our behalf, adding that the community wished to have the option of returning, if that course appeared desirable.

When the project of going back to Ghent had been finally abandoned, renewed efforts were made to recover the value of the property. Even this, however, proved impossible. The premises were at that time valued at 28,000 francs, or about £1,166.* The compensation to be made to Fryson's heirs and to the actual tenant would amount to 19,300 francs (about £804). Then the expenses of a sale would not be less, Mr. Hoobrouck told them, than 1,610 florins, or about £134. But what completely put an end to the scheme was the information conveyed through Mrs. Moore, in a letter dated February 21st, 1816, that competent legal authority had declared that the community could no longer claim the Ghent house as belonging to them since the deed of sale signed at Antwerp and the subsequent payment by Fryson to the French Government (sufficiently proved by existing documents) had alienated it by law. Thus our sisters were left to regret the rash step taken by their predecessors, which left them without any hope of recovering their property. Domestic troubles, however, which arose about this time, soon directed their thoughts to another channel.

1816.

Failure of the
last attempts
at recovering
the property.

The reader will probably remember that Lady Aloysia Jefferson, when elected Abbess, had begged Dr. Milner's permission to decline the dignity, being persuaded that her nervous temperament would be unable to bear so great a burthen as the post of Superior was at that time. The good Bishop, however, full of confidence in her capability, would not consent to this; and in effect our Abbess continued for some time to manage

* It does not seem quite clear whether francs or florins are here meant. If florins, the English equivalents should be doubled, as a florin was worth 20d.

the affairs of the community in a very satisfactory manner. The time was a difficult one, but she, ever leading all by her example as well as her words to a more perfect observance of our holy rule and statutes, so conducted the temporals also—with the skilful assistance of Dame Teresa the Procuratrix—that in spite of a continual struggle with poverty there was no real collapse. But towards the end of the year 1816, her mind began gradually to show symptoms of giving way, and it became plain that her sad forebodings had been only too well founded. The terrible malady made slow but steady advances, and at last a settled melancholy seemed to defy all hopes of cure. It is easier to imagine than to describe the trial that this was to her daughters. Even before her elevation to her present post, Lady Aloysia had been one of the most exemplary and most capable of their number, and to see a mind like hers thus affected was painful in the extreme. In the spring of 1817, Dame Teresa Shuttleworth was made Prioress (retaining still her office of Depositary) and as the Lady Abbess's state did not improve, it was arranged that for the present she should have most of the powers of Superior entirely in her hands.

1816.

Malady of
Lady Aloysia.

1817.

On the 7th of October that year, Dr. Milner received to profession one of the most distinguished members whom our convent has counted since their arrival in England. Dame Juliana Forster belonged to a Northumberland family which had kept the ancient faith intact throughout the ages of persecution. Its Catholic traditions seemed fully represented by the firm, stable character of this religious, who throughout her life seemed incapable of acting from any but the highest principles, or of employing her energy and her talents (which were considerably above the average) in anything but the service of God as represented by the community in which she was placed. Before she had been professed many years she had succeeded Dame Scholastica Roskell as Mistress of Pensioners, joining to this post for a time that of Depositary; and by her indefatigable industry she rendered excellent service in both these places. If her talents were less brilliant than those of Dame Teresa Shuttleworth, she made up for this by the assiduity with which she laboured to improve herself in every branch of knowledge which could prove useful; and those who were pupils in the school during her administration of it have been unanimous in their admiration of the spirit in which she worked amongst them. Her profession occurred at a time when the community were in the greatest anxiety about their Abbess; but this state of things, painful as it was, was not likely to shake the purpose of such a character as hers.

October 7.
Dame Juliana
Forster.

Dr. Milner at last decided that it was necessary for Lady Aloysia to be suspended from her office, and that the entire powers of Abbess should be placed in the hands of the Prioress, who had hitherto exercised them only in part. He also recommended that Lady Aloysia should be removed to a place where she could have the care and treatment which her state required. The Chapter met on the 9th of March, 1818, and agreed to the Bishop's proposal, and on the 11th, Lady Aloysia was sent to Springvale, near Trentham, where a respectable family kept a private home for mental patients. Dame Teresa Shuttleworth, the Prioress, now governed the community entirely, being Abbess in all but the name. It was thought better, however, to defer for a time the election of the next Abbess.

1818

Even during this interregnum the community continued to receive members. Sister

1818. Anne Barber was professed as a lay-sister on the 11th of January, 1818, and two choir novices (Sister Benedicta and Sister Editha) were clothed the following summer; but neither of these persevered.

1819. Towards the end of the year Dr. Milner decided that the election of Lady Aloysia's successor had better take place before long, and this was accordingly done on the 1st of March, 1819, when Dame Teresa Shuttleworth was chosen by the Chapter to fill permanently the place which she had temporarily supplied for some time. Dr. Milner was unable to be present at the election himself; it was presided over in his name by the Rev. Mr. Richmond and Rev. Mr. Badeley; his Lordship arriving for the ceremony of Benediction, which took place on the 20th of April, which was the Tuesday after Low Sunday. The new Abbess was but thirty years of age, and had been professed only ten years and a half. She was the daughter of John Shuttleworth, Esq., of Cannon Hall, in Yorkshire, and had been educated at Preston. Her character and talents supplied for her want of maturity, but she herself bitterly lamented her youth and inexperience, though as regards the latter the circumstances of the last few years could hardly have failed to do their work.

Lady Teresa
Shuttleworth
16th Abbess.]

About this time several of the Ghent members passed away. Sister Benedicta Tasker died on the 30th April, 1816, at the age of seventy-four, and Sister Winefride Hayes a year later; the latter was not advanced in age, but had had continual ill health throughout her religious life. Sister Frances Champ followed them in January, 1818, aged seventy-five. Thus the community had now lost four lay-sisters at Caverswall, but as they had professed six, they were in no want of members of this class.

On the 6th of February, 1819, Dame Stanislaus White died of the effects of a paralytic stroke, which she had received two years before, and which had rendered her helpless and suffering ever since. Born of a good family in Essex, Dame Stanislaus had been professed at Ghent, together with Dame Anselm Tempest and Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld, and had always been remarkable for her exact and unostentatious observance of rule, together with a zeal in requiring the same of others when Prioress, which caused the community to renew her frequently in this office, which she held (by dispensation) for twelve years consecutively.

During the spring of 1819 it was thought desirable that Lady Aloysia should be removed from Springvale. The establishment there was kept by Protestants, and it was preferable that she should be under the care of Catholics. Accordingly she was taken to Wolverhampton and placed in charge of Mrs. Bloodworth, a good Catholic. The community learned, with sorrow, that there was no improvement in her state.

Departure of
Mr. Richmond

In the month of September our sisters had to bear the trial of losing their valued confessor. The Rev. Robert Richmond, whom they had found a real treasure during the eight years that he had spent at Caverswall, was required again on the mission, and returned to his former post at Long Birch. During his residence with them he had worked much amongst the poor in the village, and had even succeeded in building a poor school for boys, and providing a master for them. As regards the girls, our sisters had so far set aside the traditions of inclosure as to erect a schoolroom for them and teach them themselves. This was rather a strain on their time, with their small number, and with their pension school to be attended to, but considering the state of Protestant

England and the urgent need of the poor mission, it was done cheerfully. Mr. Richmond's biographer gives the following pleasing picture of his labours at Caverswall, especially among the pupils:

"The nuns at Caverswall Castle had a considerable number of young ladies receiving education under their care. Mr. Richmond always showed great zeal and earnestness in the spiritual instruction of these scholars; and his success was wonderful in impressing upon their tender minds deep sentiments of piety and a sound knowledge of religion. He also took great interest in all that concerned their education. He laid down for them plans of study, and afforded valuable assistance to those of the community who were charged with the duty of teaching. Indeed the nuns of Caverswall are ready to acknowledge that whatever success they have had in the education of young ladies has been owing to Mr. Richmond's excellent method and principles. He would frequently go into the schoolroom for an hour, and give the scholars a lesson in grammar, geography, or some other branch of education. On one occasion he undertook the entire teaching of a class for some months, owing to the nun to whom it belonged being confined to the infirmary by indisposition.

"The religious owed very much also to Mr. Richmond for his care and exertions for the improvement of their land and the grounds belonging to the convent. He took the entire direction of the draining, planting, and laying out of every part, and devoted much of his time to the superintendence of the work. He would often indeed labour for hours with his own hands. There are few of the ornamental trees about the premises which he did not plant himself. He seemed to live among those holy religious as one sent from above to support, guide, and draw down blessings upon them. His memory will ever be venerated in that house; and his name associated with the most holy reminiscences of his religious daughters. He was as contented in the varied labours of his situation at Caverswall as he had been in the uniform quiet tenour of his life at Long Birch. For when a soul steadily seeks God and Him alone, it is indifferent to her where she is directed to find Him. In this spirit he obeyed a fresh call from heaven with the same ready docility. After he had laboured at Caverswall about seven years the flock had very much increased. There appeared also an encouraging prospect of a further augmentation of the number of the faithful in the direction of Lane End, a populous town of the Staffordshire Potteries, about three miles from Caverswall. A piece of ground was purchased in an eligible part of the town, with the sanction of Dr. Milner, and Mr. Richmond with his wonted energy set about collecting subscriptions, and undertook the labour of erecting a chapel there; this being the second sacred edifice built under his care. The chapel at Lane End was begun in the year 1819. In the autumn of that year a change took place in the charge of spiritual Director to the nuns at Caverswall. They had enjoyed the happiness of being under Mr. Richmond's care and guidance for eight years. But perhaps he was too great a treasure to be permitted to remain with them longer. He was reappointed to his former mission at Long Birch, and returned thither September the 20th, 1819. He was succeeded at Caverswall by the Rev. Richard Hubbard, who had followed him at Long Birch."*

1819.

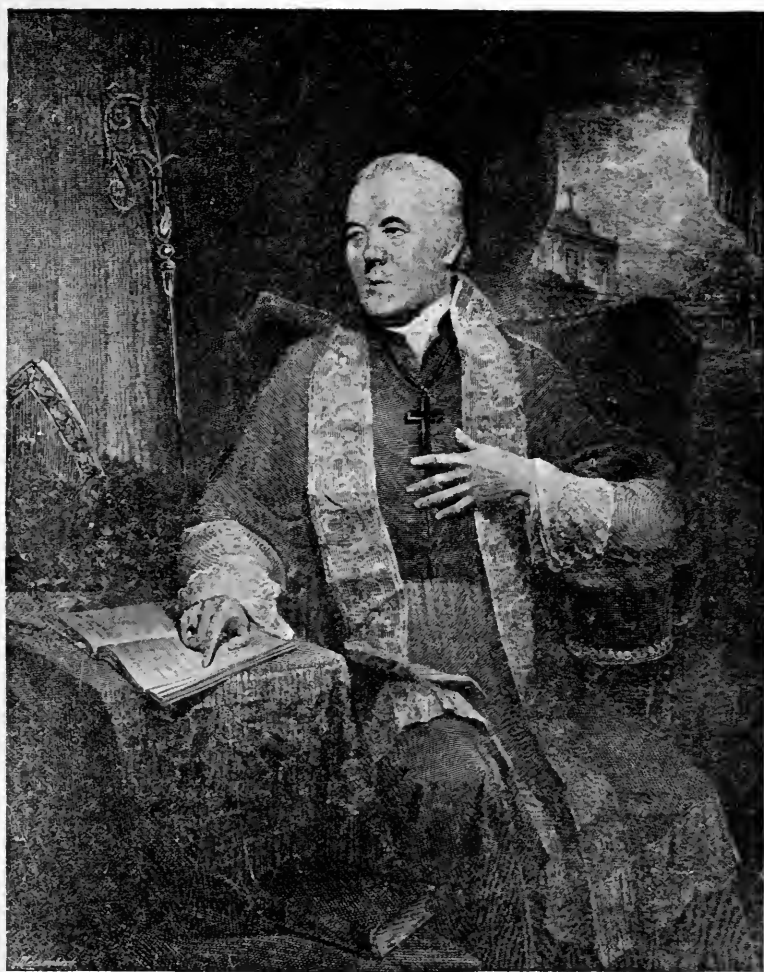
Mr. Richmond

* "Life of Rev. Robert Richmond," by Very Rev. Provost Husenbeth, pp. 53 and 54.

1819.

The removal of Mr. Richmond must have been especially a trial to the new Abbess to whom his counsels would have been so valuable. However, Lady Teresa knew how to find the right means of supplying for her own want of experience. She surrounded herself with the elders of the community, with whose assistance all went fairly well. One of the two remaining Ghent nuns, Dame Joseph, and the eldest of the English ones—Dame Clare—held alternately the offices of Prioress and Mistress of Novices for many years; Dame Magdalen Gibson was never Prioress, but she was Dean for twelve years consecutively. The temporals—still a source of constant anxiety—were in the able hands of Dame Scholastica Roskell and Dame Juliana Forster successively; and in spite of difficulties, and even scarcity of provisions, nothing went materially wrong. Lady Teresa was in frequent correspondence with the Abbess of Ypres, Lady Mary Bernard Lynch, whose age and experience inspired her with confidence, and the letters which passed between them, many of which have been preserved, show a very good feeling on both sides. But above all this we may remember the assistance and counsels of the great and venerable Bishop. Dr. Milner had a high opinion of the powers of Lady Teresa, of whom he used to say that “she was capable of governing a kingdom,” and he lost no opportunity of showing his kind feeling both for her and for the community generally. We may add that his considerateness for their straitened means was quite touching. Every time he spent a few days at Caverswall he gave a small present in money, and if he brought his horse he provided its fodder himself, so afraid was he of being any, even the slightest, burthen to them. A room in the castle was kept for his special use, and our sisters were never better pleased than when it was occupied. One anecdote, often related in the community, exemplifies his fatherly thought for his daughters. He once visited them during a very severe winter, and was struck by the chilled and numbed appearance of the religious, whose poverty did not allow of their being well clothed. After his departure a large parcel arrived as a present from him. On being opened it proved to contain a large supply of blue flannel. In his letters to Mr. Richmond, Dr. Milner would send some such message as: “Give my blessing to her ladyship and each one of my daughters as if particularly named;” or “my blessing to Lady Abbess and each nun, novice and sister.” The following passage in his *Life* by Dr. Husenbeth will give a further idea of his visits to our monastery.

“To this secluded spot (*i.e.* Caverswall Castle) he often retired for a few days to rest and refresh his spirit incessantly harassed with the labours and cares of his responsible station. It was his custom, when he came thither on horseback, to alight when he came near to the castle, and give his blessing to it very solemnly He always took a most kind and paternal interest in the convent at Caverswall Castle. There he felt himself in the reviving atmosphere of holiness and religion; and that he had escaped for a while from the turmoil and distractions of the world. It was often said that to see Dr. Milner in his real character one should see him at Oscott or Caverswall. He was free from restraint, safe from invidious observation, and surrounded by friends in whom he could repose entire confidence. Then all the amiability of his real character came forth. He was neither watched nor criticised nor suspected; and he was easy, cheerful and affable. His conversation was always instructive and edifying;



BISHOP MILNER.



and on these occasions he had no reserve, but made himself exceedingly agreeable to every one."*

1819.

The year after Dame Teresa's election, she received to profession her cousin, Dame Placida Shuttleworth, daughter of George Shuttleworth, Esq., of Hodsock Park, in Nottinghamshire. This religious became a very valuable member of the community, to which she was able to render excellent service by her varied talents and solid virtue.

We must now give a little episode relating to the history of one piece of Ghent property, namely, the marble altar of the chapel. Our readers will probably remember how, when on the eve of departure, our sisters had requested M. Portois, the sculptor, to convey it to his magazine, and take charge of it until they should ask for it, and how this was contrived during the night when the French were actually in the town. In the year 1808, this man, probably despairing of returning it to the lawful owners, sold the bas-relief which had adorned the front to the Count de la Faille, a Belgian gentleman, for 150 florins, or about £12 10s. A little later, however, our sisters began to think of inquiring for it, and at their request M. Hoobrouck de Moreghem, in 1817, made his way to M. Portois' magazine to ask what had become of it. He found it safe, but put away in several pieces, the valuable bas-relief having gone. It must have originally been a very fine altar, for M. Portois told him that even as it was, without that important part, it was worth 1000 florins, or about £82. He offered to polish and renew it and bring it himself to Caverswall Castle for the sum of 200 florins (about £15). But whether it was that our sisters could not then afford to pay this sum, or that they could not decide on any course on account of Lady Aloysia's state, they postponed their answer. At last they found an opportunity of making the altar useful in another way. A German priest, Rev. Christian Schütte, who was building a church at Glandorf, in Hanover, where religion was in a very neglected state, had rendered great service to our community by procuring them some foreign books, which he arranged by catalogue and sent to England. Lady Teresa, who was now Abbess, wishing to show her gratitude and perform a work of charity at the same time, sent him some little gifts for his church, and presented the marble altar to him. This was in the year 1819. However the distance from Ghent to Glandorf was so great and so difficult of passage that M. Schütte found it more to his purpose to sell it than to pay the expenses of its carriage, so in the end it found its way to M. Goebert, a priest of Ghent, who placed it in the church of S. Michael in that town. Portois was told by the Abbess that he was welcome to the price of the bas-relief in return for the care he had bestowed upon it, and that any further remuneration which he claimed should be arranged with M. Goebert, who had bought the altar for much less than it was worth.

The marble altar of Ghent

About the year 1822, our sisters were obliged to undertake some very heavy expenses in repairs for the castle, which had become a matter of dire necessity. Had it not been for the generosity of their friends they would have been in the greatest straits, but on making their wants known they received contributions to the amount of £119. We find, on the list of benefactors on this occasion, the familiar names of Roskell, Stourton, Gillow, Smythe, &c., &c.

1822

* Husenbeth's "Life of Bishop Milner." pp. 265 and 266.

1822.

During the autumn of that year an event occurred which brought mingled joy and sorrow. A novice, Sister Mary Sales O'Callaghan, who had just completed her probation, broke a blood vessel suddenly, and was quickly brought to death's door. As she had given every satisfaction to the community during her novitiate, she was elected for profession, and had the happiness of pronouncing her holy vows on her death-bed just sixteen days before her happy departure. Her death signified the loss to the community of a young and promising member, but as regards the innocent soul herself, we may confidently hope that it was rather a gain than a loss, thus to fly to God in the white robes of her second baptism. She had been of a bright, cheerful disposition, and it is said to have been a fit of laughter, when passing the recreation hour amongst the children in the school, that brought on the fatality which caused her death. Nor was this death without its fruits in another way. There was in the school at that time a girl belonging to a family which was not without its interest for all connected with Ghent. This was Fanny Smythe, niece to the Baronet Sir Edward Smythe, and great-niece to the celebrated Mrs. Fitzherbert, wife of George IV. This family (that of the Smythes of Acton Burnell and Esshe Hall, co. Durham) was the same as that into which Grace Carington, niece to Dame Francisca of Ghent, had married a century before. Fanny Smythe had a great admiration for the bright little Irish novice, and had once told her that she also should be a nun, and take the name of Sales. "But," said the novice, "what am I to do? You must first get rid of me." The rest is well known. A few years later, little Fanny became Dame Sales Smythe, whom many, both nuns and seculars, still remember with esteem and affection.*

1823.

In the year 1823, Dame Scholastica Roskell having become celleraire, Dame Juliana Forster succeeded her as mistress of the school, and in this important and laborious place she rendered the most valuable service. All the children under her care acquired a respect for her which they never afterwards lost, whatever path of life fell to their share. The spirit with which she inspired them is shown by the fact that eight of her pupils afterwards joined the community, whilst numerous others entered other religious houses.

1824.

On the 6th of February, 1824, Lady Aloysia Jefferson died at Wolverhampton of a rapid decline. She was not quite fifty years old, and had passed nearly twenty-two years in religion, during almost seven of which she had been deprived of her mental faculties. She was sufficiently sensible to receive the last sacraments, but it would not be true to say that her mind ever really recovered. It was a great grief to our sisters not to be able to assist at her death-bed, but her body was brought to Caverswall and interred in our cemetery.

July 18.

The same year Sister Magdalene Edmonds, one of our Ghent sisters, departed this life. She was advanced in years and had become almost childish, but in her time had been a serviceable member, especially in the apothecary's shop, where she had laboured successfully both for the community and for the poor in the neighbourhood.

October 12.

The following autumn Dame Winefride Gregson was professed for the choir. She

* Dame Salesia Smythe was the third daughter of George Smythe, Esq., second son of Sir Edward Smythe, 4th Bart., and Eliza, daughter of Henry Harvey Venour, Esq., of Alverstone Hall, co. Warwick.

1824.

was the daughter of a protestant father, and, having lost her mother in her childhood, was brought up by her maternal grandfather, Mr. Owen, a very rich man. At his death his ample fortune was left to her, and the family trustees placed her and her sister at school, their education having been much neglected. Dame Winefride thus came to Caverswall, her sister being sent to Abbot's Salford (now Stanbrook). This resulted in both becoming Benedictines in the respective communities which had educated them.* At her profession, Dame Winefride, having made a suitable provision for both her sisters (one of whom settled in the world), made over her property to the community, which at this time of poverty was the greatest possible boon.† It pleased God, however, to try her with almost continued ill health for some time after this, and she was confined to the infirmary for fourteen years with an affection of the spine, but her religious fervour never abated, and her patience was a good example to all.

Another Ghent sister died on the 9th of February, 1825. This was Sister Aloysia Gillet, who had been an active member of the community for nearly forty years, during twenty-five of which she had filled the laborious office of cook.

1825

Towards the end of the year 1825 our sisters became anxious about their good Bishop whose health began to show signs of breaking up, and the following January he came to Caverswall Castle for a little change, and also for the sake of the care and attention he always received there. The nuns were pleased to be able to prepare such food as he could take, for his appetite was failing very much. After some stay with the community he returned home. In the month of March they wrote to inquire after him, and received the following beautiful answer, which was the last letter he ever wrote to Caverswall.

1825.

"To the Lady Abbess and Religious of Caverswall.

"Dear Daughters,

"I thank you for your kind inquiries after my health, and still more for your pious prayers for my general welfare. It is true I am very infirm, and cannot be far off that great change which we must all undergo; but there are no symptoms in me that I am aware of of an immediate dissolution. However, in my situation and character I ought to practise what I preach; I ought to prove that I am in earnest when I daily repeat *Thy Kingdom come*. In fact, what is there worth living for, except to do penance for sin and to be resigned to the holy will of God! Happy are you to have left the world before it leaves you. Never then think of it but with pity, being convinced with the Apostle that *whatever is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh*, that is sensuality, or *the concupiscence of the eyes*, that is avarice, or *the pride of life*; that is pride properly so-called and vain glory. For my part I have much, very much, to make me afraid of the awful tribunal of the Great Judge; but I have the precious wounds in His hands and feet and sacred side to excite my hope, and make me descend cheerfully into the grave. In conclusion, pray for me, as I do for you, that we may meet in a joyful eternity, never more to part, but to enjoy our God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, in a blissful eternity.

Dr. Milner's
last letter.

+ J. MILNER.

"Wolverhampton, March 13, 1826."

* Dame Winefride's sister afterwards became Abbess of Stanbrook, where she had taken the name of Scholastica.

† Dame Winefride's fortune amounted to nearly £20,000. Before this time our community had been in such straits that it is said they often had not enough to eat.

1826.
Death of
Bishop Milner,
April 19.

This letter, the original of which we carefully preserve, was an indication of Dr. Milner's feeble state, for the writing is so tremulous as to be scarcely legible. On the 19th of March, which was Palm Sunday, he said Mass for the last time. A month later, his soul departed to its Creator, on the 19th of April, 1826. The feelings of our sisters when they heard of his death may be better imagined than described, and they prayed for his soul with full hearts. It was agreed that as long as any of the choir nuns then living should survive, a Mass should be offered for him every year; and this was faithfully done until the death of Dame Etheldreda Bayliss who was the last of the number. As she lived till the 31st of December, 1881, this yearly Mass was continued for fifty-five years.

It was about the year 1826 that our community first ventured to allow novices and postulants to wear the head-dress belonging to their state. Hitherto they had been dressed like the professed nuns, from a vague fear of the consequences which might be entailed if it were known that new-comers were received. Now that the nuns had been more than thirty years in England, their existing at all must have been proof enough of that, and at the date we mentioned they ventured to give the postulant's "kerchief" of Ghent pattern to four young people whom they had received on trial. This was probably thought a considerable move. At the clothings in the following year the four postulants received the white double veil, as it had been worn at Ghent, and is still in use amongst us to this day.

Our community, having now lost their admirable Bishop, Dr. Milner, were, however, fortunate in his successor. Dr. Thomas Walsh, - born about the year 1775, had been educated at the college of St. Omer. On the fall of that house at the French Revolution, he went to St. Edmund's College, Old Hall Green, to pursue his studies, and remained there till the year 1801, when Dr. Stapleton, the President, being nominated Vicar-Apostolic of the Midland District, took him with him to Wolverhampton as his secretary. After Dr. Stapleton's death in 1802, Mr. Walsh (now a priest) remained attached to his successor Bishop Milner, who placed him at Oscott for some years, and consecrated him Bishop in 1825 that he might act as his coadjutor. As Vicar-Apostolic, Dr. Walsh ever showed the kindest interest in all the concerns of Caverswall Castle, in testimony of which we will here give an interesting extract from one of his letters to Lady Teresa, dated from Bungay, in Suffolk, July the 26th, 1827.

1827.

"In every direction I travel the prospect in favour of our holy religion is most cheering. Chapels, priests, and money are wanted. Oh that we had a few more Lord Shrewsburys! How many souls would be saved! I this day offered up the holy mass to draw down the Divine blessing on his lordship and excellent family. I am quite delighted with the *humility*, the ardent zeal, the piety of the good pastor of this congregation, the Hon. and Rev. Edward Clifford a *monk of the Order of St. Benedict*. May God bless him and send many like him into the vineyard; pray for the same good to religion. Offer up a holy violence to heaven by your united petitions, which a faithful observance of your holy rules, a lively faith, fervent devotion, purity of mind and body, an earnest desire and holy zeal to become religious after God's own heart may cause to ascend up like sweet-smelling incense to the throne of mercy, that *they may not return again till the most High has regarded them!* Oh happy, thrice happy

1827.

daughters of St. Benedict, if fully sensible of the high honour conferred on you, and truly grateful for the spiritual blessing, you labour to become in *truth* and in *deed and not in word or in tongue only*, the humble, the chaste, the faithful spouses of Jesus Christ! May every blessing from heaven descend on you all, my dear daughters in Jesus Christ!

1828.

"I yesterday thought Sister Martha had a fair prospect of a job*—I had a kind of sore throat with progress towards the old cough. I get into violent perspirations, &c., in the warm chapels. She will be disappointed; I am much better to-day. I think you will find me on the whole much improved in health when I next visit Caverswall which will probably be early in September. . . . If Miss Dixon and Miss Mainwaring be at Caverswall my blessing to them.

Your faithful servant in Xt.,

+ THOMAS WALSH.

The year 1828 saw the profession of the four novices; two in May and the other two in November. The first pair were Dames Agnes Young and Frances Gould. The former was related to the Youngs of Kingerby Manor, an old Lincolnshire family, and had been educated at Caverswall sufficiently early for acquaintance with Dame Agnes Carr, for whom she conceived a great admiration, and whose name she begged permission to take. Dame Frances was a convert and a native of Winchester, who had latterly passed a year or two in our school for the sake of religious instruction. She brought a larger fortune than most postulants, which was one of the helps sent to us by a merciful Providence in those difficult times. The two professed in November were Dame Agatha Hoy and Dame Sales Smythe. The history of the latter has been already given. Dame Agatha was of the Hoys of Stoke-by-Nayland, in Suffolk, and had been educated at Winchester with our sisters there.

In the summer of 1828 our community buried in their cemetery a Bridgettine nun, Dame Dorothy, of Aston. Many of our readers will be aware that in the year 1810 the English Bridgettine community, which for long years had been settled at Lisbon, sent about half their number to England, to try their fortune there, the affairs in Spain and Portugal being so unsettled. After some sojourn first at Peckham, and then at Somers Town, they came to Staffordshire, stayed for a little time at Cobridge, and then settled at Aston, where they took one half of the Hall. In the end they all died out, as it had been foreseen for some time that they would, for which reason they had never been able to obtain leave to profess their novice, Sister Bridget. Two of their number, Dame Teresa Howard and Dame Etheldreda Nowlan, had, in the years 1817 and 1818 respectively, begged admittance into the Benedictine monastery at Winchester, and ended their lives with that community, dying at East Bergholt (whither they removed in 1857) in 1861 and 1881 respectively. Those who settled at Aston Hall died one after the other—Dame Dorothy in June, 1828, Dame Gertrude Allison in 1836, and Lady Elizabeth Farnes, the Abbess, in 1837. Two lay-sisters were the only members now remaining. One, Sister

The Bridgettines
of Aston

* Sister Martha had charge of the apothecary's shop.

1823.

Ursula, took lodgings at Newcastle-under-Lyne, and the other, Sister Clementina Smith, went to Winchester in 1840, and died there three years later.*

1830.
Arrival of
Mr. Jones.

We have mentioned that the loss of the good and great Bishop Milner was a less blow to our sisters than might have been expected, owing to the kindness and fatherly affection which they received from his successor. As regards their confessor, however, they were not quite so fortunate. But in 1830, Dr. Walsh succeeded in finding a more suitable convent chaplain in the Rev. William Jones, one of a family of five priests. The change was found to be advantageous in every way.

The Cowl
restored.

1833.

At the close of the year 1830, Lady Teresa received tidings of a legacy which had been left to her, and she resolved to take advantage of the means thus afforded to complete the religious dress of the community. A large supply of serge was accordingly procured, and a set of cowls (or "Greate Habitts" as they were called at Ghent) was made, from the pattern of the two old ones that had been brought to England.

In January, 1833, another of our venerable Ghent members closed a long and edifying life. Dame Joseph Molyneux was eighty years of age, and had kept her jubilee two or three years previously, and now, worn out by age, she died, full of sentiments of piety and confidence. This good religious had been a source of special edification by her regularity in rising at five o'clock, even in her old age, when she would never profit by the usual dispensation given to the aged, unless required by obedience to do so.

The secular
congregation
transferred to
Lane End.

The chapel at Lane End, commenced by the Rev. Robert Richmond, was now completed; and as the admittance of a congregation at Caverswall was a decided inconvenience, Bishop Walsh arranged to transfer the mission to Lane End. At the same time, considering that the subscriptions received by the nuns for their chapel had been given partly with a view to its accommodating a congregation, he proposed that the community should give the sum of £250 to the Lane End Mission, declaring that they should henceforward be exonerated of all obligation of receiving a congregation into the chapel. This was accordingly done, and from that time forward our chapel has been a purely conventual one.

Sightseers.

For many years, however, Caverswall Castle continued to be a great place for sight-seers. It was one of the chief attractions of the neighbourhood, and when we remember that at that time there were not more than a dozen religious houses in England, and that Caverswall was almost the only one in the Midland Counties, this is not surprising. Many droll stories are told of these sightseers, illustrating the original ideas that some of our country people had on the subject of nuns. For instance, a man presented himself one day at the gate, which was promptly answered by Sister Teresa Musché, the portress. "What do you want?" she asked.—"I want to see a nun," was the answer. She saw at once that the visitor had not come on business, so she answered readily, in her broken English:—"Well, I am a *non*. Dey are all just like me. You can go now." Another somewhat similar story was printed in a periodical, in which an account of the castle was given. It related that a gentleman visitor was one day

* It is an interesting fact that the other half of the Lisbon community has come to England of late years, and is settled at Chudleigh, in Devonshire. This house is one of great interest, being the only Pre-Reformation community now existing.

approaching the castle when he met one of the nuns in the avenue. He accosted her, saying that he wished to see a nun.—“Then I am one,” she replied —“You a nun!” he exclaimed, “Why, *you* are a *woman*!”

1833.

On the 23rd of March, 1834, the community lost Dame Gertrude Howe, one of the earlier Preston members. She died from the effects of an abscess, which had caused a tedious and very suffering illness.

1834.

The following June Dame Teresa Smith was professed. She was forty years of age, and had long been her own mistress; but these drawbacks only served to make her humility and obedience the more edifying, and the fervour and perseverance with which she strove to overcome the difficulties which she experienced in learning to recite the Divine Office were beyond all praise.

In the month of March, 1836, Dame Austin Eccles died of a dropsy, which had caused her to suffer a sort of martyrdom. Her patience was rewarded by a calm and happy death.

1836.

The August of the same year saw the profession of Dame Catherine Beech, the daughter of a neighbour and kind friend of our community. She and her sisters had been educated in our school.

The following winter the community suffered from a dreadful visitation of influenza, which prostrated nearly all the members. It was with the greatest difficulty that the choir was kept up, and indeed this was only managed with the assistance of some of the older girls in the school. With zeal and delight did these children come to Matins night after night, feeling themselves highly privileged to be allowed to do so, and acquitting themselves wonderfully well of the duty.

This influenza was too much for the strength of good old Dame Magdalene, now the oldest nun in the house. She sank under it, and expired on the 29th of January, 1837.

1837.

A week later Sister Martha followed Dame Magdalene to the grave, a victim also to the epidemic. The community at this time was so prostrated with sickness that a woman from the village had to be engaged to assist in nursing the invalids. Sister Martha's death occurred during the night; her agony was long and severe, and the only persons able to be present with her were Dame Agatha Hoy and the village-woman, who was not a Catholic. The former used often to relate in after years the events of this sorrowful night, during which she did her best to pray and assist the poor sufferer.

This trial passed at length, and in the month of April, a lay-sister novice, Sister Aloysia Daniel, was elected for profession. But the Lady Abbess was too much out of health at the time to take part in a religious ceremony, so the profession had to be deferred. Lady Teresa, though of a strong constitution, had frequently suffered from severe attacks of illness from which she generally recovered in a surprising manner; but for two or three years previously to the date of which we are speaking, the rupture of a blood vessel in the head had caused serious attacks of paralysis, and as this was added to an affection of the heart, she had been a complete invalid for some time, and Dame Scholastica Roskell, the Prioress, had been obliged to fill many of her duties. At last her maladies reached a climax under which she sank, and on the 22nd of September, 1837, she breathed her last, much regretted by her surviving children.

Death of
Lady Teresa
Shuttleworth.

1837.

This our sixteenth Abbess had entered the novitiate early in life, and was professed in 1808, when barely twenty years old. By her talents and energy she had rendered valuable service to the community, both before and after her promotion to the highest place; and it was she who first begged and obtained permission to have the feast of the Sacred Heart inserted in our calendar, for at that time its celebration was by no means universal. This was in the year 1833. She also fixed that public prayers in honour of the Sacred Heart should be said on the first Sunday in each month, as it is still practised amongst us. She was not quite forty-eight years old when she died, after seventeen years of an active and useful prelature. She had professed nine subjects, all for the choir, and had buried eight, of whom three were lay-sisters. In her time also two children, who had died at school, were buried in our cemetery, Bridget Ives (1832) and Anne Hadfield (1834), daughter of Joseph Hadfield, Esq., of Leese Hall, in Derbyshire.

On the 9th of October the Chapter met to choose her successor, under the presidency of the Rev. William Jones and the Rev. Louis Gerard, whom the Bishop had appointed to represent him. The members of this Chapter were as follows :

Dame Scholastica Roskell, Prioress.

Dame Etheldreda Bayliss, First Dean and Celleraire.

Dame Juliana Forster, Second Dean and Mistress of Pensioners.

Dame Placida Shuttleworth, Mistress of Novices and Procuratrix.

Dame Clare Hall.

Dame Bernard Wareing.

Dame Xaveria Hartley, Infirmary.

Dame Anne Joseph Eccles.

Dame Winefride Gregson, Chantress and Guardrobe.

Dame Agnes Young, Sacristan.

Dame Frances Gould.

Dame Sales Smythe.

Dame Agatha Hoy.

Dame Teresa Smith.

Dame Catherine Beech.

The result of the election was the installing of Dame Juliana Forster as Abbess. Dr. Walsh performed the ceremony of her Benediction on the 21st of November, the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, which day she chose herself because it was the feast day of the school, over which she had presided with such motherly interest and affection for nearly fifteen years. The following day Sister Aloysia Daniel was professed having waited seven months for this happiness. Lady Juliana nominated Dame Sales Smythe Mistress of the School, and before many months were over, she herself had the happiness of giving the postulant's habit to two of her former pupils.

Lady Juliana found much still to be desired in the temporal affairs of the community. Lady Teresa's able administration had indeed prevented anything like a collapse, but the maintenance of so large an establishment was a great strain on their still slender purse. Repairs too sometimes mounted up very high. For instance, the clearing of the moat and construction of an aqueduct (in February, 1837) cost £65. The moat, however, though it had its inconveniences, had also its advantages. It was well stocked with fish,



LADY JULIANA FORSTER, 17TH ABBESS.

and supplied many a Friday's and Saturday's dinner, the nuns themselves (chiefly Dame Bernard) doing the fishing. And then it was a great protection. Except when it was frozen over it was never deemed necessary to lock the outer doors at night, for it gave more security than locks or bolts.

1837.

Several little legacies had come in during the past three or four years; one of £20 was left to Sister Scholastica, Sister Joseph also had a legacy of £47, and Cardinal Weld in his will bequeathed a small sum to the convent.

Lady Juliana, when she became Abbess, revived the poor-school, which had been discontinued for some years. She had a great devotion to every kind of charity to the poor, and she had this one much at heart. It continued again for some time.

On the 22nd of June, 1839, Sister Joseph Ibison, who had been for some time going through a martyrdom from a virulent cancer, ended her sufferings and departed this life; her place was filled up the following November by the profession of Sister Juliana Dutton.

1839.

June 22.

On the 3rd of September, 1840, the two choir novices we have alluded to, Dame Gertrude O'Farrell and Dame Aloysia Rimmer, made their profession, and this happiness was shared the following December by Sister Benedicta Seed, a lay-sister, who had been lady's maid to Mrs. Gandolfi.

1840.

In the year 1841, Lord Shrewsbury presented the community with a painting of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, having St. Benedict and St. Scholastica on each side of her, which he had had executed by a Roman artist, expressly as an altar-piece to the Caverswall chapel. It now hangs in the church-cloister. His lordship was ever a kind friend to our community, whose near neighbour he was when residing at Alton Towers. John, the "Good Lord Shrewsbury," needs no description here; his name was a household word amongst English Catholics, and it will be long before his memory has died from our midst. He and Lady Shrewsbury were in the habit of paying long calls at Caverswall Castle, where they were entertained in the workroom by the community, and they were frequently accompanied by all the friends, both Catholic and Protestant, who happened to be visiting them at the time. The original and naïve remarks of the non-Catholic visitors on these occasions often produced much amusement. It is to Lord Shrewsbury's generosity that we owe the beautiful oil paintings which adorn our workroom. The large groups of the Holy Family, Our Lady with S. Francis and St. Catherine, and the life-size pictures of St. Catherine the Martyr and S. Praxedes are much admired by our visitors.

1841.

Lord
Shrewsbury.

It was about the year 1841 that the new organ for the chapel was procured. The old one was small and insufficient, and had become antiquated in style. The friends of the community gave generous subscriptions to meet this expense, Bishop Walsh and Mr. Hoy (Dame Agatha's father) contributing £30 each.

In the summer of 1843, a last piece of intelligence about the old house at Ghent reached the Lady Abbess. This was a letter from a former pupil there, now a grey-haired old lady, who, having been married to a Flemish gentleman, was residing in Belgium. We will give this interesting letter in full:—

1843.

"Mary Ann Greenwood: who may be called the almost last of the remainder of the Benedictine nuns of Ghent, is this day, first of June, 1843, writing these lines in the

Letter from
Mad Dethyckerl

1843.

drawing room of Mrs. Edgard* to the Dames of Ghent now in * * * * [this word is illegible]. She lately assisted at the translation of the last remains of those nuns, who were taken out of their mouldered tombs, placed in a large case containing their united ashes, and put in the Cemetery of St. Peter's of Ghent. On one was found the medal in silver of the Plan of the Convent, on the other side St. Benedict, which was placed amongst the medals of the University of Ghent. Mary Ann Greenwood watches over the remains of the Convent and whenever she sees a stone decaying she summons the Reparator. The Convent is a Manufactory and on the foundation of Church is Built the House of a Rich Citizen of Ghent—Some pensioners of the nuns are still alive; Countess Murat, Countess Listervald, and the Baron [Baronne] de Laune and your Humble servant

M. A. DETHYCKERI NÉ GREENWOOD."

Alas! There was now no one left to remember the old lady but Sister Teresa Musché, and she had grown infirm and almost childish. But all were interested in receiving news of the venerable house which had been the cradle of our community. As regards Sister Teresa, she had acted for many years as portress at Caverswall, but her infirmities had obliged her ere this to be removed from the gate.

Many attempts have been made towards recovering the medal mentioned in Madame Dethyckeri's letter, but as yet without success.

Profession.

During the next few years our community professed on an average one member a year, so, as the deaths were not so frequent, the numbers were slowly rising. On the 6th of July, 1843, Dame Baptist Forster was admitted to profession. She was Lady Juliana's youngest sister, and was already middle-aged. The following year on the 3rd of September, Dame Juliana Marsland's profession occurred. She belonged to a Lancashire family with whom Catholic instincts and traditions seemed hereditary. The piety of her parents will long be remembered by our community and by many an English mission (notably that of Burnley), who have benefited by their generosity. Dame Alphonsa Furniss came next, and two years later Dame Stanislaus Bowdon. The latter belonged to the ancient Catholic family now known as "Butler-Bowdon." She, as well as all the novices of this period, except Dame Juliana, had been brought up in our school; her two sisters had been there also, and later on, her four nieces were educated with us at Oulton.

1844.

But in the meantime our sisters suffered a heavy loss in the premature death of Dame Placida Shuttleworth, who was carried off by decline on the 13th of August, 1844, in her forty-eighth year. She was much missed for her good example of religious virtue no less than for her excellent abilities.

1845.

On the 7th of November, 1846, our last Ghent member, Sister Teresa Musché, died at the ripe age of eighty-six. After her death the "Dutch pension," as it was called, ceased. This was an allowance granted by the Dutch Government of the Netherlands to the British religious who had been driven out of their dominions by the French Revolution. It appears to have been commenced soon after the date of the Congress of Vienna, and the pension from the English Government ceased from that time. Every year till the death of Sister Teresa, a list of the Ghent survivors had been forwarded to

* The Edgards were an English family who lived at Bruges.



BISHOP ULLATHORNE

*Reproduced by kind permission from the Catholic Truth Society's
"Life of Archbishop Ullathorne."*

Belgium, and the allowance came accordingly. The amount was not, however, always quite the same, and seems to have varied from £4 to £6 per head each year.

During the year 1848 the community lost two valued members. The first was Sister Benedicta Seed, a young and promising lay-sister. She had never been strong, and an attack of influenza, contracted in December, 1847, brought on consumption, of which she died on the 26th of the following June. The second was Dame Winefride Gregson, whose health had been gradually improving until the previous August, when she was attacked with apoplexy. She rallied again, and all had hoped she would recover, but a relapse on the 11th of September ended fatally, and she departed this life in the forty-seventh year of her age and twenty-fourth of her profession.

During this year our sisters lost their good and kind Bishop, Dr. Walsh, who was removed to the London district, and was destined to be the first Archbishop in the new English Hierarchy. However he survived but a short time, dying on the 18th of February 1849. He was succeeded in the Midlands by Bishop Ullathorne, a Benedictine monk, who was translated thither from the Western district, where he had been the Vicar-Apostolic for about two years. He soon came to Caverswall Castle to make the acquaintance of his new daughters, who enjoyed the benefit of his fatherly care and enlightened government for forty years afterwards.

On the 3rd of July, 1849, Dame Walburga Raby was professed for the choir. She had been educated at Caverswall, but afterwards, having accompanied her parents to Bavaria, she there decided to make trial of the religious life in the English Institute of Our Lady at Nymphenburg. The life however did not suit her, so she concluded to come to the house where she had received her education, and was received amongst us and happily professed, though her health was none of the strongest, and it was afterwards thought that her lungs had long been affected.

The lay-sisters had lately diminished in number, and a few professions amongst them were welcome. Sister Winefride Hope and Sister Placida Worden or Weardon (of the same family as Sister Anne of Ghent) were admitted on the 28th of November, 1850, and Sister Maura Laws on the 23rd of April in the following year. The same year the death of Dame Clare Hall, the first Preston nun, occurred. She had kept her jubilee in the month of May and was then in fairly good health, but in November she was attacked by an illness which carried her off in a short time.

On the 12th of October, 1852, Dame Benedicta Rimmer was professed for the choir. She was Dame Aloysia's youngest sister, and they had a cousin in the novitiate.

The community was now steadily increasing in number, and already for some time past they had been considering the best means of enlarging their abode, which was becoming daily more and more necessary. Bishop Walsh had at one time proposed raising it by one storey, and a Mr. Barlow had actually drawn a design to this effect; but more competent judges declared that it would quite spoil the appearance of the building, so the idea was abandoned. It was also becoming desirable to build a better church. The Caverswall chapel had been considered in 1812 an excellent conventual structure, but in 1848, when religion and religious art had made such great strides in England, it was quite out of date, and not at all what should be found in a Benedictine Monastery, where the choral service is the principal duty. Between the years 1840

1846.

1848.

Bishop
Ullathorne.

1849.

1850.

1851.

1852

1852.

and 1848, the celebrated Pugin had visited the castle in the company of Lord Shrewsbury, and had been consulted on the subject. He discouraged the scheme of raising the castle, but seemed to think the chapel might be managed and the buildings enlarged by throwing arches over the moat. This seemed a strange idea, and it was thought that a chapel and rooms so situated could not fail to be very damp. Between the castle and the moat there was not space enough to build, and if the chapel had been on the other side, it could not have been under the same roof which would have been more than inconvenient. At last the matter was laid before Bishop Ullathorne, who boldly proposed a removal, in case a suitable dwelling could be found elsewhere. The nuns were somewhat startled at the suggestion, which of themselves they would probably have never entertained, but Dr. Ullathorne was convinced that it would be the best course, so Lady Juliana began to make enquiries whether any property was for sale in the neighbourhood. It was some time however, before anything suitable was heard of. In the meanwhile, by the Bishop's advice, some daily prayers were begun and a novena made to ascertain the will of God in the matter.

At last Dr. Ullathorne heard of a mansion not many miles from Caverswall which was to be sold, and which seemed likely to suit our purpose, and he immediately forwarded his information to Lady Juliana.

Project of removing.

Oulton.

Among the hills of Staffordshire, about a mile beyond Stone, lies the picturesque village of Oulton. Close to this was a country house built of red brick and with gabled ends which gave it an almost Elizabethan appearance. This house had been built nearly a hundred years before by a lawyer called Mr. Dent. It had subsequently passed through several hands, having been enlarged and improved, and was now put up for sale by a widow lady, Mrs. Bakewell.

From all accounts the situation was good, the grounds large and well wooded, and the land fertile and of excellent quality, so all seemed promising. The Lady Abbess applied to Mr. Beech, Dame Catherine's father, and through his kindness plans of the buildings were obtained; he also gave a very satisfactory description of the place. The Bishop came a few days later, and, accompanied by Father Jones, went to Oulton and inspected the property, with which he expressed himself pleased. The following week the Lady Abbess, by leave of the Bishop, went over herself, taking Dame Catherine with her, and had an interview with Mrs. Bakewell. The result was that it was determined to effect the purchase if an agreement could be made about the terms. For a time, however, this could not be arranged, so the matter remained in suspense.

853.

Lady Juliana continued to offer prayers and novenas for God's blessing on the proposed change of abode, and at last in January, 1853, an agreement was come to about the price of the house at Oulton, and by the month of May the purchase was made, it being arranged that the community should take possession in June.

When our sisters were leaving Ghent, they had hurriedly buried Dame Teresa Hodgson; when removing from Preston they were delayed by the funeral of Lady Bedingfeld, and so now that they were again to change their abode, they had to leave a familiar face behind. Dame Anne Joseph Eccles had long been ill of an incurable sickness, and on the 27th of May, 1853, she breathed her last, after a long period of patient suffering. Dame Anne Joseph had been the first to receive the religious

habit at Caverswall, and was the last buried in the cemetery there. During the forty years of her religious life, she had been distinguished by her fervour and love of prayer.

At the commencement of June, preparations for moving were set on foot. The June. Lady Abbess hired a carriage, which the steward, drove backwards and forwards as often as it was required, the new house being about six miles distant from Caverswall Castle. Lady Juliana herself, with Dame Baptist, the depositary, went over very frequently, accompanied sometimes by others of the community who were able to make themselves useful in arranging and preparing the rooms; several remained there altogether, but on the 24th of June all returned to the castle to be present at the profession of Dame Winefride Dawber, the novice whom we alluded to before. Hers was the last profession at Caverswall.

Many alterations were required in the new premises, and for some time the house was full of workmen, under the supervision of Mr. Lewis Jefferies, of Stone, whose father had superintended the similar repairs for us at Caverswall in 1811. It was decided that the castle, with the land attached (amounting to about twenty-two acres), should be put up for auction, and the matter was entrusted to a Mr. Higginbotham, who fixed the 28th of July for the sale. A result of this was that privacy was at an end, as many visitors came to inspect the place.

In the meanwhile Bishop Ullathorne appointed the 13th of July for the laying of the foundation stone of the new chapel at Oulton. He performed the ceremony himself, being assisted by the Rev. Father Jones and the Rev. Father Leonard, a Passionist from Aston.* Our late friend, Mr. Austin Beech,† then a youth, acted as thurifer on the occasion. The Lady Abbess and some of the community were present, but not all of them, as the final removal had not yet taken place. The Bishop preached a very striking sermon, which made a great impression on the poor of the village, who had come in great numbers to witness the scene. At Caverswall a holiday was kept in honour of the event.

Laying the foundation stone of the new chapel.

The removal took place in the third week in July; it was accomplished in several parties, the last of which left Caverswall on the 23rd. The saddest feature of the departure was the forsaking of the cemetery which contained the remains of so many valued sisters, but this was not included in the sale, and it is still the property of the community. The graves numbered thirty in all; twenty-four of the religious,—twelve of whom were from Ghent,—one Bridgettine, three pensioners, with a sister of one of them who had died in the neighbourhood, and a maid-servant of the convent.

Departure from Caverswall.

The chapel was pulled down that it might not be devoted to secular purposes, and indeed the appearance of the castle was better without it.

The purchaser of Caverswall Castle was Mr. Holmes, a rich timber-merchant of Liverpool. He did not remain there many years, however, as it was too far from his

* The Passionists settled at Aston Hall after the extinction of the Bridgettines, but did not remain there many years.

† Mr. Austin Beech was the brother of Dame Catherine (now Abbess). His three sisters, two daughters and eight nieces were educated in our school. Of the nieces two are now members of the community, and five are nuns and one a novice in other houses. His youngest daughter is in our novitiate, and two of his sons are priests.

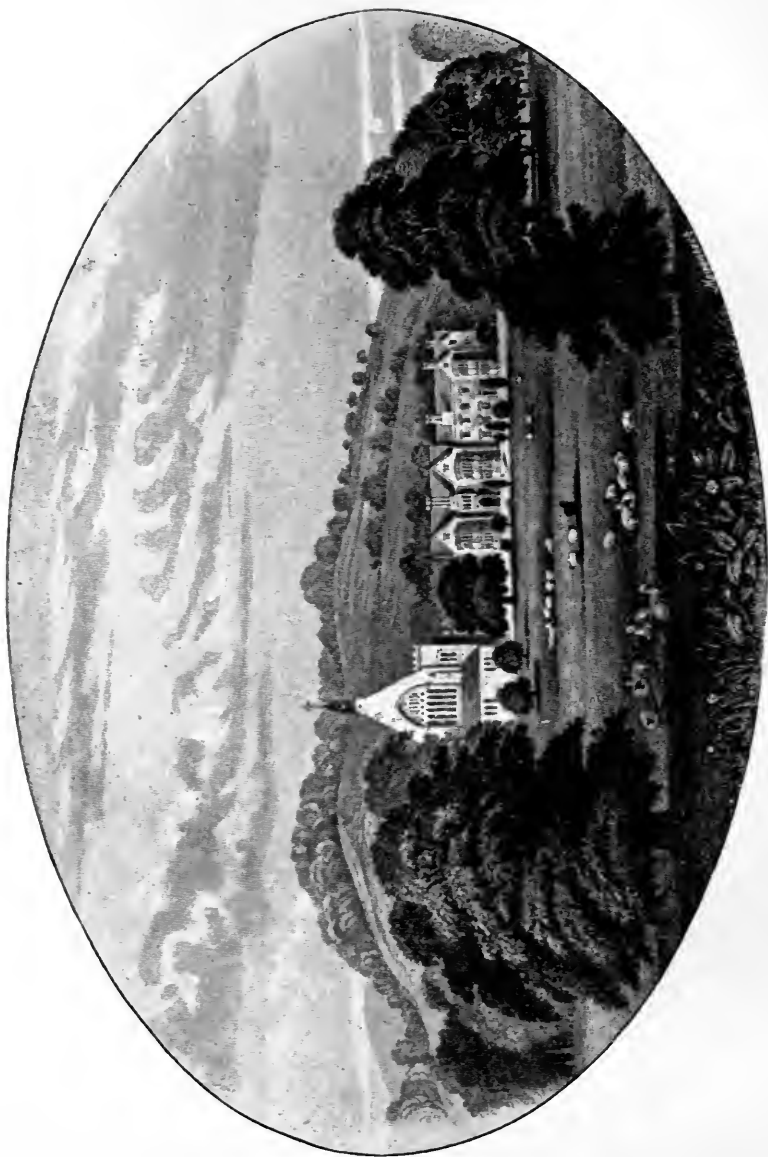
1853.

timber-works for convenience. It then came into the hands of Sir Percival Radcliffe, Bart., who, thinking the place damp, had the moat dried up. The visitor may now see in its place banks of flowers. The Radcliffe family lived at Caverswall some years, and then they also sold it. Since then it has passed through several hands, and is now the property of a Mr. Bowers.

During the forty-two years residence at Caverswall the community had professed twenty-four dames and twelve sisters, and had buried fourteen dames and ten sisters.







ST. MARY'S ABBEY, OULTON.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

ST. MARY'S ABBEY, OULTON.

A.D. 1853—1869.

The new monastery was named St. Mary's Abbey. Its situation and general appearance have been already described. The form of the building was on the whole convenient for conventual purposes, though, of course, not so much so as a formally built monastery would have been, and many alterations were needed in the apartments destined for the school, the low cloister connecting them with the rest of the house being built about the time of the arrival of the community. The present entrance gate with the Good Angels' room and guest-cloister were added a little later.

The list of the community at the time of this its third translation stands as follows:—

Lady Juliana Forster, Abbess.
Dame Scholastica Roskell, Prioress.
Dame Xaveria Hartley, First Dean.
Dame Etheldreda Bayliss, Second Dean and Mistress of Novices.
Dame Bernard Wareing.
Dame Agnes Young, Guardrobe.
Dame Frances Gould, Infirmarian.
Dame Mary Sales Smythe, Mistress of Pensioners.
Dame Agatha Hoy.
Dame Teresa Smith, Sacristan.
Dame Catherine Beech.
Dame Gertrude O'Farrell, Chantress.
Dame Aloysia Rimmer, Celleraire.
Dame Baptist Forster, Depositary.
Dame Juliana Marsland.
Dame Alphonsa Furniss.
Dame Stanislaus Bowdon.
Dame Walburga Raby.
Dame Benedicta Rimmer.
Dame Winefride Dawber.

LAY-SISTERS.

Sister Mary Davies
Sister Scholastica Barlow.
Sister Austin Smith.
Sister Agnes Perkin.
Sister Aloysia Daniel.
Sister Juliana Dutton.
Sister Winefride Hope.
Sister Placida Worden.
Sister Maura Laws.

1853.

Our sisters had received for Caverswall Castle a sum a little exceeding that which they had given for it. The property at Oulton, including as it did forty-five acres of excellent land, cost them considerably more; yet Lady Juliana with her wonted courage and energy, determined to raise a church which should be truly worthy for the singing of God's praises. Mr. Pugin having lately died, his eldest son Mr. Edward Pugin undertook the design, and if our chapel was his first, it certainly was not his meanest performance.* The work of building progressed steadily, under the conduct of the builder, Mr. Denny, during the years 1853 and 1854. The community in the meantime fitted up as a temporary chapel the room now called the workroom, which was a convenient one for the purpose, as it communicates by folding doors with an ante-room or hall, where some of their number could kneel to hear Mass. It was Mr. Pugin also who designed the entrance gate with its "turn" for giving alms to the poor, and the portress's lodge, which, with the Good Angels' Room and guest-cloister was added about this time, as we have already said.

1854.

Retirement of
Mr. Jones.

In the course of the first twelve months of residence at Oulton, the Rev. Father Jones, who was now advanced in years, decided to resign his post and retire. This was accordingly arranged, and he left on the 16th of June, 1854. At first he went to live with his family, but he had grown so accustomed to his life with us that he could not make himself happy elsewhere. Eventually he returned, and, with the Bishop's approval, ended his days at St. Mary's Abbey. He had been our chaplain and confessor twenty-four years, and had always been regarded as a staunch and valued friend.

One of the Passionists from Aston acted as temporary chaplain until the arrival of Father Jones's successor. This was the Rev. Francis Fairfax, who was no stranger to the community, having long been their neighbour while in charge of the mission at Cheadle. He arrived at Oulton on the 22nd of July the same year, 1854.

Our sisters were now eagerly looking forward to the opening of the new chapel. Mr. Hardman, of Birmingham, whose daughters were being educated by the community, had promised to have the east window ready for an early date; this was to be a present from him and his family. The children in the school were busily making a collection amongst themselves and their former companions for another stained window, which was to represent the Presentation of our Lady in the Temple, this being the mystery to which the school was dedicated; and it was intended also as a compliment to Lady Juliana, who had received the Abbatial Benediction on the Feast of the Presentation. This window, however, was not expected to be in time for the opening.

Finally, the debt being cleared off, Bishop Ullathorne decided to consecrate the chapel on the 24th of November that year, 1854, and to open it solemnly the same day. Great preparations were made for the event. Mr. Pugin was to be present, and also Messrs Hardman and Powell from Birmingham, and many of the clergy of the diocese.

It proved no easy task to be ready for the day fixed upon, and so much had to be done at the very last, in sweeping and cleaning the church and cloisters (the workmen having only just cleared out), that the greater part of the community was up

* When, in the year, 1867, Lady Abbess Juliana kept her jubilee, Bishop Ullathorne wrote to Rome for a plenary indulgence to be gained by the community on the occasion, and said in his letter, "She has built a church than which there is none more beautiful in England."

Consecration
of the chapel.



CHOIR OF THE CHURCH, ST. MARY'S ABBEY.

all night on the eve of the 24th. Mr. Pugin was at this time only nineteen years old, and the mixture of boyish excitement and manly genius which he displayed was amusing enough to witness. His sisters in the school (two of them were being educated there at the time) received very little notice from him, the coming function being all absorbing. He wanted the floor of the choir polished before it began, but the shavings were only just being swept out, and such a scheme was hopeless. Shortly before the commencement of the ceremony he was found in the back kitchen blacking his boots with a surplice on, and when told that the carpet for the predella had come and was a little too short, he exclaimed—"Cannot the nuns crochet a bit to the ends?"

1854.
Mr. Pugin.

The ceremony of consecration was commenced early in the morning, and was followed by the High Mass of opening, at which Bishop Ullathorne pontificated. Bishop Brown, O.S.B., of Newport and Menevia, and Bishop Brown of Shrewsbury were also present, and some twenty-four priests, amongst whom were Rev. Bede Smith, O.S.B. (Dame Teresa's brother), Rev. Henry Marsland (Dame Juliana's brother), Canon O'Sullivan, Rev. Mr. Hardman of Liverpool, &c. Mr. Hardman and family, Mr. Powell, Mr. and Miss Wilson of Alnwick, Mother Juliana Hardman, and Sister Frances Walburga of Handsworth Convent were among the guests. The music of the mass was entirely Gregorian, and was sung by members of the choir of St. Chad's Cathedral, Mr. Hardman and Mr. Powell acting as cantors, while Sister Frances Walburga presided at the organ, in which she was a great adept.

The function was followed by a grand dinner, at which his Lordship the Bishop presided. Many stories regarding the culinary department on this great day are still told by the lay-sisters. How Mrs. Bowdon, of Southgate, sent a large and varied supply of fish for dinner (it being Friday), and Mr. Forster of Burradon, four firkins of butter for cooking; how our old friend Miss Wilson came beforehand and helped the cooks to prepare the confectionery, while Mr. Beech placed his dessert service and Mrs. Silvester her tea service at the disposal of the community; how Mr. Denny's thirty workmen had a grand dinner in the laundry, and how the mince pies and plum puddings were made with minced carrots instead of suet because it was Friday, the difference being scarcely perceptible. All went off very well, and the festivities of the day concluded by Pontifical Vespers sung by Bishop Ullathorne.

The dinner.

It will perhaps not be out of place to give here a little description of this our beautiful chapel.

Description of
the chapel.

Its length is about ninety feet, and it consists simply of chancel and choir, with a side chapel thrown out on the Gospel side for the accommodation of seculars. A cloister runs round outside the choir, on the walls of which hang the stations of the cross, executed in terra cotta by Messrs. Meyer, of Munich, and presented to the community by Mr. and Mrs. Brisco Ray, in 1886, in honour of the present Abbess's golden jubilee. The choir communicates with this cloister by three doors, one at the west end opposite to the altar, and the others on either side just outside the chancel rails. The altar is adorned in the front by a representation of the Annunciation carved in the white stone. The reredos is divided into four parts, each containing a carving of some type of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception selected from the Old Testament, viz.:

1854.

Moses and the burning bush, Aaron and the flowering rod, Gedeon with the fleece, and the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. At each end of the reredos is a carved canopy, under which are statues of SS. Peter and Paul. Over the altar, under a beautiful canopy, is the Ghent crucifix with its artistic silver figure. The east window consists of five lights, containing figures of Our Lady with the Divine Child in the centre, the two St. Johns on either side of her, and at each end St. Benedict and St. Scholastica. The three other windows of the chancel (containing only two lights each) are also of stained glass, and were all given by friends. On the Gospel side is St. Juliana's window, given by the late Mrs. Clark, of Wolverhampton, in honour of Lady Juliana, whose pupil she had been when at school. It represents the saint receiving the vision about the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, the other light containing a figure of our Lord, and beneath is a monstrance with the Holy Eucharist. The side chapel arch occupies the space on this side where another window would have been. On the Epistle side may be seen a window representing St. Anne teaching Our Lady in one light, and St. Veronica with her veil in the other. This was given by the late Mr. Eastwood, whose daughter Veronica (now Mrs. Coverdale) spent twelve years in our school. The second window was given by Miss Mary Roper, a former pupil, in honour of our great titular mystery of the Immaculate Conception. It represents Our Blessed Lady as described by St. John in the Apocalypse, with a beautiful figure of our Lord in the other light, while underneath, Pope Pius IX. is represented writing the decree of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

The choir is floored and panelled entirely with oak. The stalls of the Abbess and Prioress face the altar at the opposite end, and are surmounted by high and beautifully carved canopies, which, with the other stalls and their canopies, are also of oak. The choir can accommodate about thirty nuns and sixteen lay-sisters, and suitable benches for the pensioners (facing the altar) are placed between the chancel and the lay-sisters' stalls. The extra expense involved by the carving of the stalls and other parts of the interior was met by the industry of our sisters, who executed fancy-work for sale to the amount of £50 to £60. Just without the chancel rails on either side are the small altars or oratories of our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph, over which stand their respective statues beautifully carved in white stone by Mr. Lane. The statue of Our Lady was presented by Mr. George Wilson of Alnwick, and that of St. Joseph by Major Stapleton. The choir is lighted by ten windows, five of which are on the Gospel and four on the Epistle side, where the organ loft takes up the space that would have been occupied by one more. The large west window opposite the altar is of stained glass, and is a very fine one. It was presented by the friends and former pupils of Lady Juliana Forster at her jubilee, and represents in its six lights six holy Anglo-Saxon Abbesses, namely, St. Hilda, St. Winifride, St. Editha, St. Etheldreda, St. Walburga and St. Wereburgh. Beneath, angels are presenting the Abbey and the Church. The smaller windows of the choir have three lights each; only two of these are stained; one is the Presentation window given by the children which we have already alluded to, and the other, given by Miss Mary Anne McClune in 1880, is in honour of St. Joseph, and represents three scenes in his life, namely, his espousals with Our Lady, his vision of the Angel, and the flight into Egypt. All these windows are the work of Messrs. Hardman of Birmingham. Finally,

we have only to mention the interesting statue of St. Benedict over the west door of the choir, the history of which will be given later, and the statues of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica in the cloister, carved by Mr. Lane and presented by Mr. William Hoy, of Stoke Priory in Suffolk.

The completion and opening of the new church was a great convenience and satisfaction to our sisters, who, at last, had a temple worthy of its high destiny, the solemn chanting of God's praises. Even at Ghent, where the monastery was so superior to any building we have had in England, the chapel could not be compared with that of Oulton. A few months after the opening, however, they experienced a sensible sorrow in the death of Dame Walburga Raby, at the early age of thirty-three. She appears to have had the seeds of consumption in her constitution for some time, but had managed to keep in fairly good health till about two years after her profession when the malady began to show itself, and after a tedious illness she peacefully expired on Easter Tuesday (April the 10th), 1855. She was the first to be buried in the new cemetery.

The first profession at Oulton was that of a lay-sister, Sister Lucy Wealleans, a native of Northumberland, and a pleasant, cheerful and active worker in behalf of the community. She was professed on the 21st of January, 1858.

The following year a choir novice, Dame Margaret Coupe, was professed on her death-bed. She was a bright and promising girl who had been educated in our school and admitted when very young into the novitiate, where she gave great satisfaction. A bad cold, which she caught in the spring of 1859, terminated in consumption, and the community soon saw, to their great regret, that they were destined to lose her. For her own part she was happy and content and quite resigned to die, as the Lady Abbess assured her that she should be allowed to make her vows. This she accordingly did on the 24th of May, and died peacefully on the 21st of June while the Conventual Mass was being celebrated. The Lady Abbess and Rev. Father Jones were with her to the last.

Professions succeeded each other somewhat rapidly during the next few years. Dame Josephine Davies was professed on the 25th of October, 1860, and Dame Mechtilda Cook about a year later. Dame Placida Dunham in April, 1862, and her sister Dame Maura in July, 1863. A month after the latter event, Sister Mary Davies departed this life in a good old age. Her loss was much felt, as even in her declining years she had found the means of making herself useful in various ways.

Our school continued to flourish at Oulton. Dame Sales had continued to conduct it until the summer of 1856, when her health became much affected, and Lady Juliana thought it well to remove this burthen from her, and to entrust it to Dame Gertrude O'Farrell, who for some years had acted as second mistress. During her time the system of education was improved and modernised, which, in some points especially, was becoming necessary. The number of pupils varied but slightly for some years, but as time went on, and our school, instead of being almost the only one of its kind in the Midlands, became one of a great many, they diminished till they reached our present average number of twenty to twenty-four.

The year 1864 was signalised by two deaths. Dame Xaveria Hartley passed away on the 7th of June, two days after the 53rd anniversary of her profession. She had spent

1854.

1855.

1858.

1859.

Professions
and deaths.

The School.

1864.
June 7.

1864. a long and useful life in religion, rendering special service in the office of Infirmarian which she held for twenty years, and in the poor school at Caverswall (a work which was never revived at Oulton) where she had laboured with great assiduity. She died of the effects of a paralytic stroke.

The death of Dame Sales Smythe was the second that we alluded to. Her health had not materially improved since her removal from the school, and at last a bad gathering in the finger showed that her system was much affected. Disease soon showed itself and gradually spread, till on the 16th of October, the anniversary of her name-sake Dame Sales O'Callaghan, she gave up her soul to God. Dame Sales was only fifty-five years old. She left a large circle of friends outside the community who lamented her loss, for, having been mistress of the school nearly twenty years, she was well known and much respected both by our former pupils and their families. Five of her children became members of our convent.

1866. In the year 1866 our community came into possession of an interesting mediæval statue of our Holy Father St. Benedict in a very unexpected manner. It had formerly belonged to a Cistercian Abbey in Brabant, of the history of which we will here give a slight sketch.

Near the town of Tirlemont in Brabant stood the Abbey of Oplinter, also called "Val-des-Vierges." It was founded early in the 13th century by the venerable Bartholomew Lanio, or "De Vleeschommer," so called from his trade, who thereby laid the seeds of a great improvement to a wild marshy country much infested by robbers and outlaws. The Cistercian nuns who settled in this monastery gradually had the lands drained and cleared, the poor cared for and the sick tended, for a village had quickly grown up outside their walls. At the French Revolution this community, like all the others, was scattered, and the abbey itself left to become a heap of ruins. In 1865, the only visible remains of it were some long boundary walls of brick and stone, a large monastic barn, part of the "hospitium" and a fine old gate-house of the 16th century. On the inner wall of this gate-house is a white sandstone tablet recording the date of its erection, with the arms and motto of the foundress. On the exterior of the same tower is a large sculptured group in alto-relievo representing Our Lady's apparition to St. Bernard. This dates from about 1700. Over the little wicket door which adjoins the chief entry there stood a remarkable statue of St. Benedict in a small niche, and on the pedestal are the words "Vallis Virginum," and also "S. Pater Benedictus," while a little lower down, the iron stanchion for a lamp may be seen.

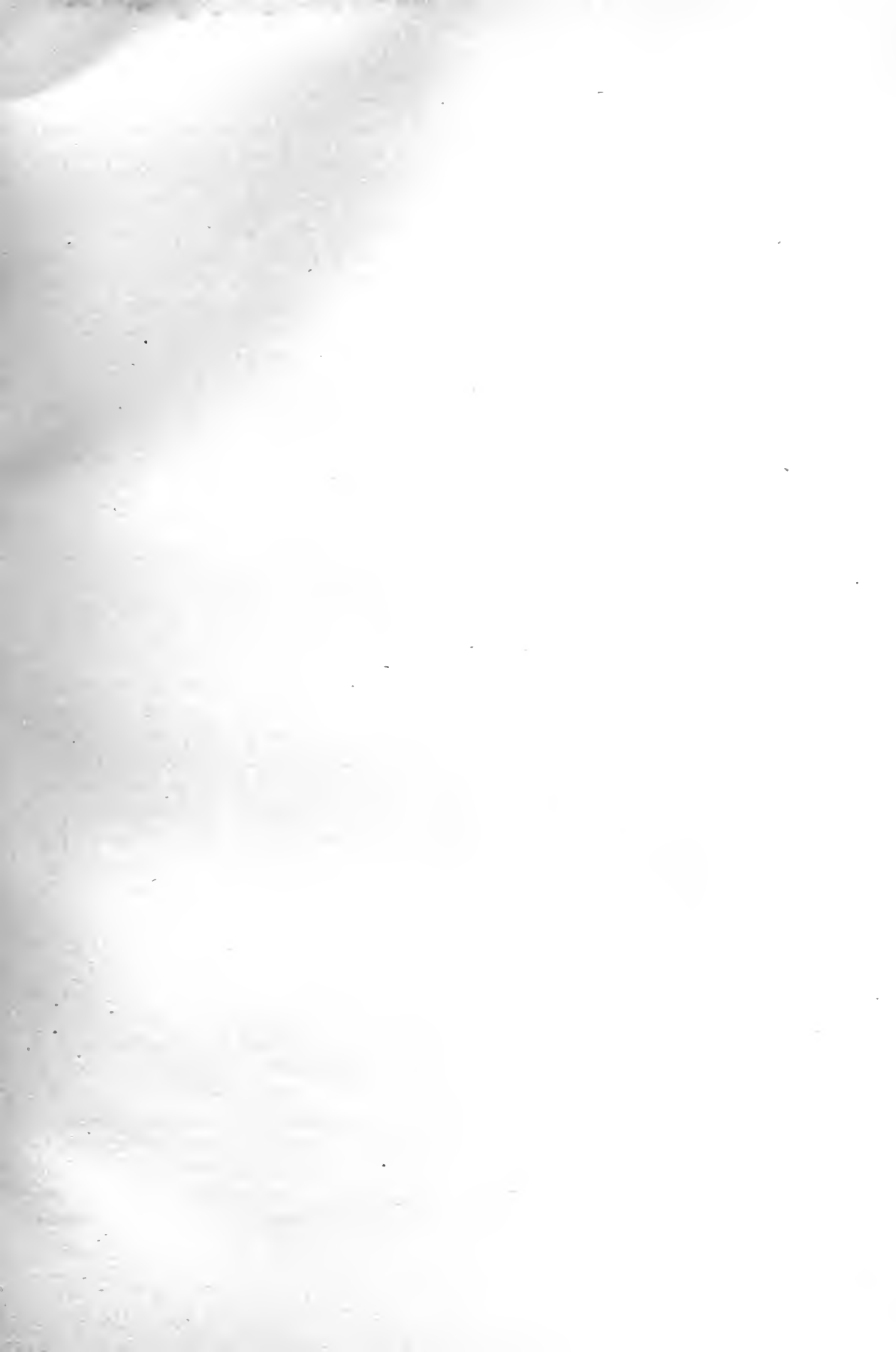
This old statue had often attracted the attention of the Irish archæologist, Mr. Michael Buckley, then a professor in the Josephite College of Tirlemont. He conceived a strong desire to have it restored to some Benedictine monastery, and decided upon ours, which he knew of only by hearsay, having never visited it. He applied to the Countess of Quiquembourg, the proprietress of the land on which the ruins stood, and was received with great affability. She quite entered into his plan, and promised to let him have the statue, giving him at the same time the sum of £4 as a present to our community to be spent upon it. Mr. Buckley communicated with Lady Juliana, and decided, with her approbation, to spend some of this money on the restoration of the statue, which was a good deal dilapidated by time and weather. He intrusted this matter

October 16.

1866.
Statue of St.
Benedict.

Abbey of Val-
des-Vierges.

Mr. Michael
Buckley.





WEST END OF THE CHOIR AT OULTON, WITH STATUE OF ST. BENEDICT

to Mr. Brangwyn, an eminent English architect, who was residing in the neighbourhood. Under his direction it was re-painted in encaustic, on true mediæval principles, and the work, when finished, excited so much admiration that Mr. Brangwyn soon found himself in request for several other things of the same nature, other old statues needing restoration. Finally, our Holy Father was entrusted to a Belgian naval officer, who was crossing over to England, and safely received by our community in the summer of 1866. It gave the greatest gratification, being in fact an interesting piece of art in a very uncommon style. In height it is not much more than three feet three inches, the material being a kind of Maestricht freestone. The saint is represented in his black cowl with its wide sleeves, and the hood half drawn over his head. The cowl is partly lifted up on one side, showing a white woollen tunic beneath, a clear evidence of the statue having been designed for Cistercians. In the right hand is the abbatial staff, while the left supports the book of the rule on which stands the broken cup. At his feet is the raven with the poisoned loaf.

1866.
Statue of our
Holy Father.

Lady Juliana had a bracket or pedestal carved in oak to hold the statue, immediately over the west door of the choir, to which it is a great ornament. There our Holy Father seems to stand and look down with prayerful face upon his children as they chant the praises of God. Many thanks were rendered to the kind archæologist who had so unexpectedly made us this valuable present.

In the year 1867, on the 7th of October, Lady Juliana kept her golden jubilee, and her children vied with one another in honouring the joyful event in every way they could. Bishop Ullathorne sang Pontifical High Mass, and a number of the clergy of the diocese were present, as well as secular friends, amongst whom were several members of the Hardman family. Mr. Hardman had died that same year, but his son was there with his mother and sisters. The festivities were kept up in the community for a week, during the course of which a friendly visit was received from the Dominican nuns, who had been settled for some years in the neighbouring town of Stone. Their venerated foundress, Mother Margaret Hallahan, was too much out of health to join the party, but she was no stranger to our sisters, having visited them once at Caverswall and again since their arrival at Oulton. We also received a visit during that week from the Abbess of Stanbrook, Lady Placida Duggan, accompanied by Dame Justina Day. The nuns of that community were then contemplating the erection of their present handsome chapel, and of considerable additions to their monastery, and the Abbess had received permission to leave her inclosure for the purpose of visiting such buildings as might afford useful suggestions. Bishop Ullathorne had said to her: "When you have seen the convent at Stone and the choir at Oulton you will do." And accordingly he escorted her to both places himself.

1867.
Lady Juliana's
Jubilee.

Visit of the
Abbess of
Stanbrook.

It was on the occasion of this jubilee that the beautiful west window of the choir was put in. It was a present from former pupils and other old friends, and, like the other windows, was the work of Messrs. Hardman, of Birmingham. No offering could have been more pleasing to Lady Juliana. Her whole heart and soul were engrossed in the glory of God's house, and to her, as much as to anyone living or dead, could be truly applied the words of King David: "Domine dilexi decorem domus tuæ et locum habitationis gloriæ tuæ." (Ps. 25). While the window was being put in, she was constantly in and

West window.

1867. out of the church, watching the work with the deepest interest, and, with the help of a glass, trying to make out its every detail.

1868. The summer of 1868 was an unusually hot one; for weeks and months not a drop of rain fell, and scarcely a cloud came to temper the burning rays of the sun. The vegetation was parched up, and nothing seemed to thrive except the hay. Lady Juliana, who was of a very feverish complexion, suffered intensely from this heat; she was now upwards of seventy years of age, and her constitution, naturally a good one, was beginning to feel the effects of her years. She suffered also from anxiety about old Father Jones, who was quite breaking up, and evidently had not much longer to live. He kept up with difficulty during the first part of the summer, but at last took to his bed, from which he never again rose.

August 14.
Death of Father Jones. On the 14th of August, old Sister Agnes Perkin, who had long been confined to bed, died calmly. She was followed in exactly a week by Father Jones, whose decease had now been expected from day to day. He was eighty-four years old, of which he had spent thirty-eight with us, being our chaplain for twenty-four. He had been for some time the senior priest of the diocese, and the Bishop himself officiated at his funeral, and buried him in our cemetery, for which he gave a special permission. Father Jones left his property (which was not inconsiderable) to the diocese, and his library to our community.

Professions. Several professions took place during these years. Sister Benedicta Blake made her vows on the 22nd of February, 1865, Dame Cecilia Turner on the 6th of November, 1866, Sister Justina White a year later; Dame Walburga Stott on the 5th of May, 1868, and Dame Laurentia Ward on the 11th of November the same year. This was the last profession which Lady Juliana received. The following February witnessed her sudden death, and we were unexpectedly deprived of her motherly care and firm and prudent administration. She was as well as usual on the 25th of January, and went to Holy Communion with the community. She spent some time that morning in the kitchen garden talking to the gardener, in a sharp east wind. During the afternoon she sat in the guest-room with a friend, the room being very cold. That evening she did not feel well, and absented herself from Matins, a very unusual thing for her to do. Next morning she was seized with a shivering fit, and it was evident that she had a severe cold. This created some anxiety, and the doctor was sent for. Not liking the symptoms of the malady he called in a second medical man, and they pronounced the malady to be bronchitis, attended with considerable danger. A novena was immediately commenced for the recovery of our dear mother, and many letters were sent to friends earnestly begging their prayers. But it did not please God to hear them in the sense in which they were offered. The suspense was but short; the last sacraments were administered, and Lady Juliana, who was fully aware of her state, spent a considerable time the last days of her life, speaking with her children singly, arranging business, giving advice where it was needed, and making herself again what she had ever been, all to all. Shortly before her death the Bishop came and had an interview with her; he seemed much touched and edified with all he heard and saw. Finally, on the Purification of Our Lady, 1869, after Vespers and Benediction, we were all summoned to witness her happy departure. May she rest in peace!

1869.

Death of Lady Juliana Forster.

The funeral was performed by the Bishop with a considerable attendance of the clergy. Our Abbess was buried in the choir which she had built and which she loved so much; the Dominican Fathers from Stone chanting the Requiem. Before the ceremony commenced the secular persons who had come to witness it, were allowed to enter the choir where the bier stood, and it was touching to witness the grief of the poor of our village, whose mother Lady Juliana had truly been. They touched her body with their rosaries and some sobbed aloud. Much kind sympathy and condolence was received by the community from all sides, and Bishop Ullathorne, in the funeral sermon, testified to the high esteem in which he held her. "I looked upon her," said he, "as a perfect model of Benedictine stability. There was no hurry—no excitement—always the same . . . When I saw her a few days before her death I was much struck. She said to me: 'I am but a poor frail creature, but I have tried to serve my God.'"

1869.
Funeral of
Lady Juliana.

The election of Lady Juliana's successor was delayed by circumstances, and it was not until the summer that it took place. The Bishop himself presided, attended by Rev. Father Fairfax and Rev. Austin Malthus, O.P., extraordinary confessor to the community. The names of this Chapter, as compared with that which had elected Lady Juliana, will show an increase of numbers in the community. They stood as follows:—

Dame Etheldreda Bayliss, Prioress.
 Dame Frances Gould, First Dean.
 Dame Catherine Beech, Second Dean and Novice-mistress.
 Dame Bernard Wareing.
 Dame Scholastica Roskell.
 Dame Agnes Young.
 Dame Agatha Hoy, Sacristan.
 Dame Teresa Smith.
 Dame Gertrude O'Farrell, Chantress and Mistress of Pensioners.
 Dame Aloysia Rimmer.
 Dame Baptist Forster, Depositary.
 Dame Juliana Marsland, Guardrobe.
 Dame Alphonsa Furniss, Celleraire.
 Dame Stanislaus Bowdon.
 Dame Benedicta Rimmer, Infirmarian.
 Dame Winefride Dawber.
 Dame Josephine Davies.
 Dame Mechtilda Cook.
 Dame Placida Dunham.
 Dame Maura Dunham.
 Dame Cecilia Turner.
 Dame Walburga Stott.
 Dame Laurentia Ward.

Dame Catherine Beech, our present Abbess, was the one chosen, and the ceremony of her Benediction took place on the 8th of August. It was the first and only Abbatial Benediction which Bishop Ullathorne conferred in his diocese.

Lady
Catherine
Beech,
eighteenth
Abbess.

CONCLUSION.

1869 to 1894.

1869.

It has not been our intention to carry our sketch in detail further than the death of Lady Juliana Forster. There are three principal events, however, which may be considered as so far important to the convent that they deserve to be somewhat more than merely touched upon, and a history of our house would be incomplete without an account of them. These are, first, the adoption of the Monastic Breviary; secondly, the revision of the Statutes; and thirdly, the new buildings. Of these events, then, we will give some little account.

Adoption of
the Monastic
Breviary.

1879.

Our readers will remember that, according to the Statutes received by our foundresses from the Abbey at Brussels, the Roman Breviary had been recited by our convent from its foundation, together with a special supplement for the Benedictine Saints. But since the French Revolution, this practice was becoming more and more an anomaly in the Order. In 1877 our sisters at Teignmouth (formerly of Dunkerque) adopted the Monastic Breviary, and their example was followed shortly after by those of East Bergholt (formerly Brussels). About this time Bishop Ullathorne first spoke of the matter to us, recommending the change to our community also, as being more in conformity with both the letter and the spirit of the Rule. After due consideration, the change was agreed to by the community, and the Bishop sent the necessary petition to Rome. The brief granting the permission for the use of the Monastic Breviary and Missal and the Anglo-Benedictine Calendar arrived in the summer of 1879, being dated May the 29th. After the delay necessary for the procuring of breviaries, the Monastic Office was formally begun on the 11th of December, 1879, a German monk from Erdington (the Rev. F. Leo Linse, O.S.B., now Abbot of Fort Augustus in Scotland) coming to instruct us in the office and ceremonial, with Bishop Ullathorne's approval.

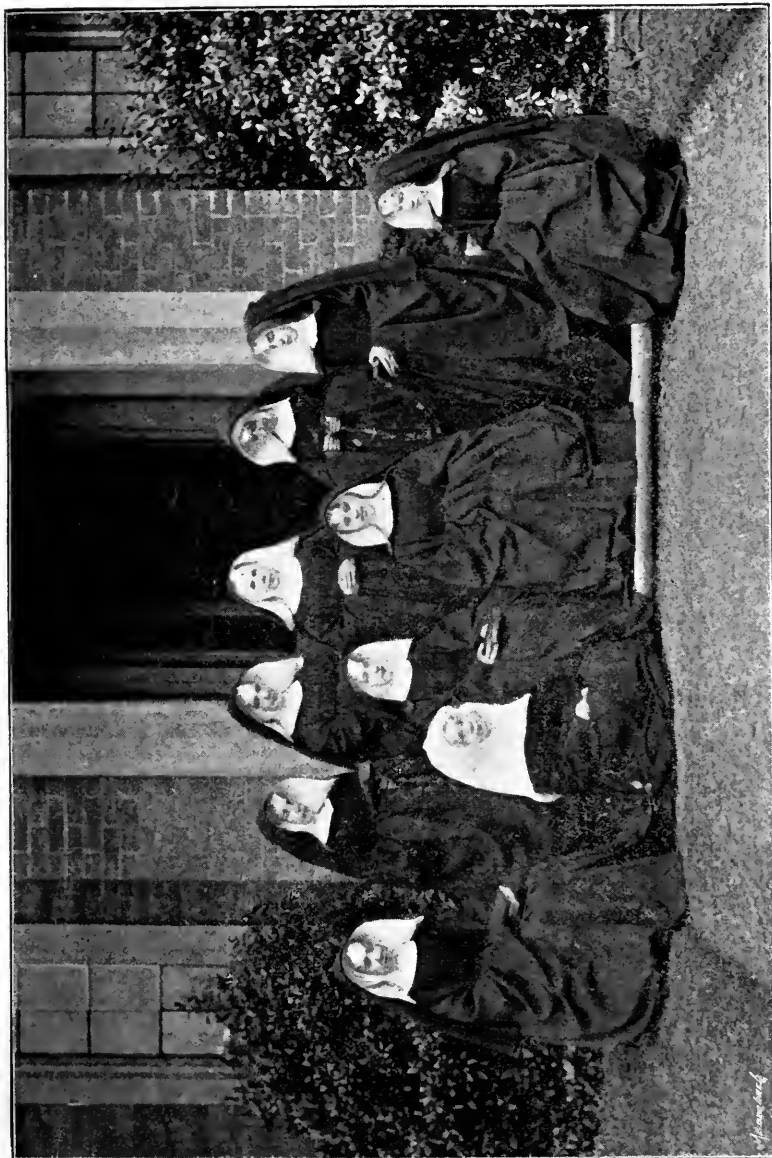
Revision of
the Statutes.

1880.

This great change was necessarily followed by a revision of the Statutes, in which the Divine Office according to the Roman rite had been a prominent feature. Such a revision had long been needed for other reasons also. Our Statutes by this time required modernising, for several of their ordinances were already out of date and obsolete; and again they had been written for residence in a foreign country, and the horarium prescribed was quite un-English. Bishop Ullathorne held our Statutes in high esteem, and thought them "conspicuous for their prudence and wisdom." He thought much, too, of the long test which they had stood, and the value of old traditions and experience generally; he therefore merely advocated revision, without radical change, and recommended that a special Council should be chosen from amongst the community for this undertaking, which was to be performed with his assistance and under his supervision. The work was commenced in the autumn of 1881, and lasted about a year. At the end of that time it was solemnly accepted by the community and confirmed by

1883.

Bishop Ullathorne on the 29th of May, 1883.



GROUP OF OULTON DAMES (1873).

We now have to speak of the new buildings. They were rendered specially necessary by the following circumstances. Religious inclosure, as our readers have seen, was observed at Caverswall only so far as the nuns themselves were concerned, strangers being freely allowed entrance, and the chaplain actually living in the inclosure. At Oulton the latter arrangement was permitted for a time, but at last Bishop Ullathorne insisted on an attempt being made at something more in accordance with the law of the Church. Accordingly a cottage just outside the monastery and situated within the gates, though out of the inclosure, and which had hitherto been occupied by the steward, was improved and re-furnished, and the Rev. Father Fairfax took up his abode there, and was good enough to be satisfied with it. As time went on, however, it was felt that it would never be sufficient for a permanent presbytery, and it was decided that a suitable one should be built as soon as the community possessed the means. A chapter-house was also badly needed, and at last, at the beginning of April, 1889, the work of building was commenced. A handsome and complete Presbytery, a double Sacristy communicating with it, and a Chapter-house were designed by the architect, Mr. Purdie, and his designs satisfactorily carried out by Mr. Inskip, a builder of Longton, during the course of the year. The Chapter-house was blessed on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and the Presbytery the following spring.

1883.

1889.

Bishop Ullathorne, on account of failing health, resigned the government of his diocese in March, 1888. He died a year later, and our community lost in him a wise Father and Superior, and one who had the welfare of his numerous religious houses deeply at heart. A Dirge and solemn Requiem were celebrated for him at St. Mary's Abbey; Bishop Milner's mitre (which is preserved there) being placed upon the catafalque. He was succeeded by our present Bishop, Dr. Ilsley, who had been auxiliary ever since 1879.

Death of
Bishop
Ullathorne.

The Rev. Father Fairfax retired from work in October, 1889, having reached an advanced age. It was well that the new Presbytery was built, for the cottage could not have accommodated two priests, and he wished, like Father Jones, to end his days with us. The Rev. Terence Fitzpatrick acted as chaplain temporarily, and in May, 1890, the Rev. Frederic Crewe was appointed to this post by the Bishop.

Retirement of
Father
Fairfax.

In the year 1892 a complete set of new laundry buildings was erected by the contractor who had built the Presbytery, to the great convenience of the lay-sisters, who had found the old laundry inadequate in many ways.

Finally, we would add that our present Abbess has buried our last Preston nun (Dame Bernard Wareing), fourteen of the Caverswall members, many of whom had reached a very advanced age, and three who had been professed at Oulton. She has received the professions of thirteen,* two of whom are her great-nieces, while a third niece of hers has been admitted to the novitiate.

We hope to celebrate the centenary festival of our arrival in England in the summer of 1894. In conclusion, we beg our readers to join with us in thanking God

1894

* The total number of professions at Oulton is twenty-four, and that of burials twenty-five. The former number includes seven lay-sisters and the latter six.

1894.

for his past mercies to our community, and in begging a continuance of the kind and loving Providence which has watched over it during these 270 years of its existence, and asking that this little family of Our Lady Immaculate and our Holy Father St. Benedict may steadily increase in number and merit.

FINIS.



APPENDIX THE FIRST.

No. I. MORTUARY BILL OF LADY LUCY KNATCHBULL, FIRST ABBESS.

In the year of Our Lord 1629 Most Happily Departed this Life Our most Pious and Right Reverend Mother In Christ My Lady Lucy Knatchbull of most happy memory on the 5th of August the 19 year of her Profession the 45 of her age and the 5 of her being Prelatrice.

My Lady Lucy Belov'd of God and man was in baptism call'd Elizabeth daughter to Reynold Knatchbull Esquire of a very illustrious, wise and ancient family, in County of Kent. At the age of seventeen by considering the vanity of the world and the Danger of Death found the strong inspires of Almighty God calling her to Religion yet loath to foregoe her liberty or loose those pretended hopes of advancements which she had an ambition to pursue, shutting the ears of her soul against the voyce of Almighty God (as she terms, for much of her life both at Bruxells and Ghent, by Order of her spirituall Guids is Extant in her own hand writing) God of his Goodness at length still persevering to knock at her heart. She declares the result in these words: Between the Desires my soul had to Embrace the Divine Vocation and the extream repugnance since found in it, my heart (as it were) was torn in pieces. And she greatfully concludes with humble thanks to God that after three years struggling she made her Resolution and broke those Chains which had so fetter'd her affections. After this for half a year she experienced great quiet of conscience, but then the Enemy brought into her mind how intollerable she was to suffer all days of her life in undertaking such a course soo contrary to her naturall Inclination to freedom. Yet for all this strife within, she sett a good Shew by Exteriour Cheerfulness, entring Bruxells Monastery with allacrity, though her heart was seiz'd upon with an Extream sadness through her many apprehensions. But for her Honour's sake she kept it very secret. After a while they gave her an Eight Days Exercise and she took this spirituall retirement very seriously, wherein God Almighty was pleas'd to give me much light and by little and little apeas'd the tumult of my heart (said she) making me forgett those follies which had been cause of my Disquiett. When she came out she set herself with a resolute spirit to do all which was ordain'd her, and she found great Comfort in her obedience, Yet now and then even weary of a solitary life, which had ever been hatefull to her; thus the Enemy cast clouds and mists before her, yet by the Light of God's Grace vertue appear'd so amiable in her Eye that she continued in her resolves to go through. Speaking thus to her self: I will doe what I can though it will cost me Dear to compass it. In all the time of her Interiour trouble she Most seriously with all Diligence prepar'd her self for holy Communion, though her feelings of Almighty God in times of Receiving was so

very little, that she did even wonder at it. But our merciful Lord rewarded most liberally all her Combats against sense and nature, with many singular favours.

The first was after she had been only 9 months a scholar, one Day newly set to kneel in her place after holy Communion she saw with the eyes of her soul a most Glorious and supernatural Star distant as far as heaven, and it alone seem'd to enlighten the whole world. This vision struck her into a great apprehension of the Greatness and Majesty of Almighty God, yet left in her soul an abundant Comfort together with an exceeding fear ever to offend so good a God, and this fear never departed from her (according to the first degree of humility). After this some of her best pretended friends out of a Good pretence (as seem'd to them) got her out of the monastery to begin a house of an other order, but her vocation it seems was so strong to be a child of our holy fathers that she had scarce any comfort or quiet till her return which was on the feast of our blessed Virgin's nativity: after she was again in the monastery, thus she Expresses herself, (having before had great fear that our Lord was offended at her) my fear grew to an End, that I could pray, read, sing, sweep, wash dishes, or whatsoever else with pleasure: for God I humbly thank him gave me a greater Desire to serve him and suffer for him: and I was glad to feel pain when it did not Indanger my Going forwards in Religion. On St. Thomas of Canterbury's day I Received the holy Habit, a day of Exceeding Comfort to me, for then I felt myself beginning to be happy. And then alluding to the feast of the Nativity she resolved In Imitation of our Saviour to become a Child humble, obedient and subject to her mother holy Religion. After this God lead her on both by the way of comforts as also by very great aridities. Yet when she had repugnance in matters of humility, she said to herself: In dispiht of thy heart thou shalt do this or that. In the Exercise before her profession God gave her an unaccustom'd feeling of his Divine presence: and her heart being tendred in affections of ardent love towards him she had the favour to see him in the form he was when he conversed with his disciples upon Earth. From this time she began to walk much as in the presence of God. Within the octave of the Epiphany on the 11 of January with great joy she made her holy Vows of profession continually increasing the desires of burning love and thirst to become wholly God's insomuch that the ardour of these affections and Desires even spent her corporal forces.

Half a year after her profession she was Employ'd in humble actions for three months together, and in that time she was so amourosly united to Almighty God, and so clear an understanding of his admirable and immediate assistance that she scarce deserned her own operations performing the good purpose which she made at her cloathing, of pulling up all her imperfections with all the indeavours she could, and that by the roots without reserve. When she came into the number of those who might be Elected for officers she was chosen thoureer, and confesses that sincerely she was very little distracted in that office. But in other occasions wherein her superior imploy'd her, they were so contrary to her that for two whole years together, she was in a continually combat with herself against her aversions being Daly strenght and efficacious grace of Almighty God, for her heart was often with him; then it was (said she) that I grew to have stronger comforts in my prayer, sometimes I have wonder'd to see how in an Instant, and whilst I was kneeling down, I have been chang'd from an Extream in

sadness, to a kind of an excess in comfort, yet the motions I had to impatience was so great that I liv'd perpetually in Extream fear of offending God. Notwithstanding he was infinitely mercifull and Good to me, and never suffered me to break forth into passion by which any were, for ought I know, disedify'd by me.

Heer we may see what a command she had over her passions, subduing them to reason, and reason to God. Once at prayer in her cell, she seem'd to be surrounded with Devils, who cast into her thoughts a despair of ever attaining to perfection; yet never stir'd from her meditation, though they assay'd even to snatch at her; at last she smell'd a sweet perfect odour of Violets upon her oratory, and the as it were vanish'd, yet again they assaulted her with a second temptation of an other kind but through God's Grace before her hower of prayer was ended it ceased and she remain'd Victor. Upon Corpus Christi Day at Even song her heart being full of tender devotion before the blessed sacrament she saw our Saviour as at the age of 12 years, in strenght reaching out his right hand, who gave her his benediction. Hear the effect in her own words. My soul hereby was exceeding much comforted and I hated to think that there should be any moment of which should not be employ'd in the service of this my Dear and merciful Lord. It grieved me to find that all my affections were not on him, and for him: for alas I found that much of my hart was divided amongst a few Creatures and the Distraction which the love I bear them caus'd me made me to understand that charity was not order'd in me. After this for a whole twelvemonth together she Pray'd constantly and Earnestly beseeching our Lord to take all her own affections and those also whom she loved so passionatly, that they might all be pleaced on him. And about the End of the Year our Lord grant'd her long suite, and it was on the feast of our Glorious Master St. Placidus, and also the day (in those times) when St. Theresia's Order served this holy Virgin: she being a Peculiar patroness of my lady Lucy's. After Communion then 5th of 8ber when many perticulars of Dear union had pas'd between our Saviour and her. She saw our Lord Draw all her affections to him, as the sunbeams draws up moles from the earth: and thus she proceeds, with this my soul began to be wise, for she was made soberly Drunk, and in an Instant turn'd from those follies in which she had taken unlawfull pleasure.

And henceforth she took Delight to tell our Lord she lov'd him, she cast her thoughts many times (more than she could number) into Every corner of the world, and upon all the Pleasures it affords, but found nowhere to rest but in God, her Proper object and only center.

An other time in a spiritual Exercise, her Soul being in Pursuite of the Incomprehensible Good, weeping bitterly for her Sins and Ingratitude, and as an addition to her affliction, she knew not how to secure herself from falling or being subject to defects, beseeching our Lord to tell her what she should doe. Whereupon he let her set him in her heart, in this manner: his Right hand was a little lifted up ready to support, and in his left hand he held a cross, and thus as she understood, she was in all Dangers, to behold him, believing assuredly that he would defend her. His form at this time was as that which she had in her Exercise fore her profession in the same manner as he convers'd with his Disciples. Her soul by this feavour was as she humbly confesses, saying it was to the Eye of my mind as if some thin vail had shadow'd him, yet not so, by that I did

see him. My soul received hereby much comfort, and my Eyes were Drawn within me so, that I had then, and Divers Times Since, upon this Occasion, difficulty to look up. Always when she presented herself to our Lord in prayer, it was with Humility and Love and the Greatest Ambition she had, was to take pleasure in nothing but to suffer for him. Before she made her Prayer she particularly invoked our Blessed Lady, St. Bennet or holy father, St. Paul her peculiar patron, St. Joseph and the rest of Sts. whom she was most Devouted to, then turn'd her humble address to the Holy Ghost Prostrating twice or thrice &c. And this was her Practice both at Bruxells and Ghent. She had a most Special devotion to Great St. Gertrude Abbess of Elpidia in Saxony, and to all her works, writing out with her own hand most or all that book of her Insinuations &c. Upon St. John Evangelists day in Christmas she had the great feavour of sucking from our Saviour's Right foot the most Excellent Vertue of humility which from that moment to her Death was never separated from her, because she practic'd all the degrees of humility in our holy Rule upon Every occasion. Once according to her accustom'd filial fear, she in Great distrust of her fear'd that by living longer she might some time or other incur some offence against Almighty God, therefore she most humbly begg'd a speedy dissolution to be secur'd, but our Lord Immediately Answer'd her thus: THOU SHALT NOT YET DYE BUT SERVE ME AND SUFFER FOR ME, to which with most humble conformity she resign'd her. On the feast of our Apostle St. Gregory's day she had this most prizable feavour of feavours. After holy Communion, her spirit being united with our Lord's in a most special manner: he suspended in her the malice of free will and took from her the power of ever Grievously offending him. O, the excess of God's goodness hidden from those who fear him, expos'd & confer'd when the Love him only and alienated from all affections to creatures.

In Lent following on the Great Festivity of our holy Father, St. Benedict, after Receiving the Blessed Sacrament all involved in the Divine Sweetness according to Custome, she began to think what could there be for her to Desire more? Sure nothing; Seeing she had within her the Sume of all perfection, the Treasure of Heaven and Earth, in the Sacred Host. Notwithstanding our Lord bid her ask of him whatsoever she would; she most humbly Declining, refer'd all to him, and she understood he was pleas'd she done soe, and perceived he meant to bestow upon her suffrance, and that he would do well for her, and effect shew'd it; seeing she remain'd for whole 9 months together after this as one Deeply Struck in Love. And upon all occasions of hearing, thinking or speaking of God, her wound and pain increased. Yet sometimes it was more or less as business occur'd. Yet in one of those fortnights she Declares a continual Excess of languishing; her soul thirsting and pining away after her spouse crying out and telling him that none but himself could comfort her. She knew she was near him, but so as in a Prison, but could not break out. In an other Exercise, for most of her feavours were either at those times of retire or after holy Communion, at Mass, or in the Presents of the Blessed Sacrament, in those days of Recollection then it was, she plainly perceiv'd that she had Received from Almighty God Great Increase of Strenght in Spirit, and a presence of God by a certain reflexion of Divine Grace, in so much that whensoever she enter'd into her heart she found her Spouse already there before her, and she saw her will being the key of her heart how our Saviour took it and kept it in his own Dear

Custody, and she was made thereby Superiour to all that which uses to tos or sway our weak minds. Other whiles she perceiv'd herself wonderfully full of God, interiourly crying out Holy Jesus Holy God. Iterating these words with out cessation for a long time together, no other words contenting her.

These following words are out of an other Paper of hers. On Munday last after Receiving the Blessed Sacrament it seem'd to me that our Lord entred into my soul as in his temple, and at the selfsame time, methought my soul was vested with our Lord; this is a kind of spiritual language which your Reverence knows better than i. Upon the feast of our Blessed Lady's Presentation the Blessed Sacrament being expos'd, and she at the last Evening Song full of her accustom'd amorous affections, rather indeed in an extraordinary manner uttering excellent colloquies Inviting the whole world to Love and Serve so good a God casting all their hearts into the Incensary as a sweet perfume &c., midst of those ardours and Excesses of mind, she found that her spirit was notably fasten'd to our Lord, but was, as it were, so converted into the same spirit, that she was made one with him. O happy soul who (as it is written) by adhearing to Our Lord became one spirit with hime, the Eternal father performing the request of his Dear Son when he Pray'd; that all true believers in him might be one. Saying as thou father in me and I in thee that they also in us may be one, &c., that the Love wherwith thou hast lov'd me may be in them, and I in them. In midst of these high feavours, she descended as low by self contempt unfainedly confirming to her Spiritual Guids That if her Dearest Friends lov'd her no better than she did her self, they would not (said she) care three straws for me. As for the Divine feavourable signs of God's Love towards her in so many Dear and intimate comforts and intire unions they are so hidden that even by her own expression they are onexpressable, being so very Delicate that indeed she could not remember them all, much less be able to write them. Yet what she could call to mind she humbly Obey'd her Ghostly fathers by affording us those we have out of her own hand, relating with all that it was by the Gifts of God ever in her power to remember the Practical parts of prayer, and her Good purposes. She had a very great Dependancy of Allmighty God, deeming all meerly but trash and foolery; only to serve him. She Performed the office of Cellarier at Bruxelles with very Good Satisfaction and edification to all, and no wonder, because humility, prudence, patience, silence, meekness and compassionate and General charity were her constant assistance; whilst she actually exercis'd that office she was translated hither with three other Reverend Dames of the quire, 2 novices, one for a Dame, another for a Convers sister. Coming to Ghent on Great St. Anthony's day, and the very next being St. Peter's Chair at Rome they had a Mass said at their own Poor altar in a Room assign'd for their Chappel. On the 18 day of January 1624. She was Elected Abbess of this little flock by all their consent and singular comfort and satisfaction, and upon our holy father's Day the very same Lent after they came to this citty, was solemnly Bless'd in the 15 year of her profession, and a bout Forty of her age. Almighty God having so peculierly chosen her to personate his place in this our new monastery her chief care was to build the succeeding edifice upon the Deep and solid foundation of profound humility and perfect Evangelical poverty, these two vertues shining eminently in all her future practices, true effects of her former good purposes. Amongst divers papers writt by the ordaine of

her ghostly father and most carefully by God's providence in his keeping, from them we here expose some of her accounts, feavours, &c., the rest you may please to read out of our records in the book of our foundation, page 152, 153, 154 and so on, to begin with her Good purposes. These are her humble expressions: 'To the End I may Generally keep my heart I will carry my Eyes more upon the ground. Every time I go in or out at any door, I will adore God in my soul and make an act of indifferency to whatsoever it shall please The Divine will to ordain—so oft as I shall find myself to have neglected the Divine presence I will cast down my Eyes with a lowly internall Reverence to the Divine Majesty. I will often remember that all they of this community are God's dear children; and that I being his poor servant ought to be very carefull of them, and to proceed with much love towards them, though methinks it be farr from my heart to admitt of any thing either in dyet or lodging or apparell more then what is ordinarie, and apointed for us all, by our Rule and Statute, yet hereafter least I should fall into any Desire of Liberty in that kind I do not only make a purpose against it, but resolve with the help of God as farr forth as my health will give me leave, to deprive myself of some such commoditys as are Lawfull. I will hold it for a great vice to do anything of moment without the advice of Ghostly fathers or the convent. I will make it a principal endeavour of myne, that silence may be well kept in the community—I will Diligently procure that superfluous conversation be not used at the Great.—That I never enter our cell without kneeling, adoring Christ in my heart and saying some prayer—that every time I hear the clock strike I make an act of contrition—that I never permit any in my hearing, much less myself, to speak of the defects of others.

These and many more points of perfection did she practice most faithfully and constantly, as well as resolve so feavourously and Piously. But concerning this last purpose of hers, in point of charity it is not to be express'd how earnestly upon all occasions she did inculcate it to her children, and she has been often heard to say that indeed nothing whatsoever could bring her greater affliction, then to see or hear the least breach of perfect union and charity in this community, this was her continual invitation in life and her last Legacy at Death. Peace, Unity, and Charity. It was found amongst her papers with exceeding austerities she did use on so weake, sickly, and infirme body, thrice a week wearing iron chains, Hair Girdles, Desciplin and the like, Standing in a tub of cold water, &c. She giving her whole indeavours to our Lord so continually, on the feast of his holy circumcision, he resolv'd to give himself to her (as she understood he did in holy communion) for a precious New Year's Gift giving her with all freedom, at the same time, to make herself so happy and blessed as she would. On a contemplation on ECCE HOMO she had the feavour to refresh her amorous heart and soul, by reposing her head upon her Dear Redeemer's left side.

Besides many other signs of mutual love and indearments past between them in divers other meditations, on Whitson thuesday she obtained at the same time and instant when she swallow'd down the sacred Host that our Lord inclos'd her whole spirit within himself to the increase of strenght in her soul without imparting those wanted sencible gusts. On the feast of St. John Baptist, she saw after holy Communion, the ensuing Great feavour, and these are her words: I Desern'd a kind of heaven within me Receiving in the Sacred Host the most Sacred and Ever Blessed Trinity, &c. I had a sight as if it

were of three Divine Persons full of majesty seated in my soul, as in several mansions. Yet undivided One and Coequal, who to my seeming had made choice of my heart as his habitation and rest, and was to me through his infinite vouchsafing a most strong refuge and benigne Protector. And you must know she had this last feavour after a most Deep and profound humbling of her self in the sight of Almighty God. Once in mass time after acts of humility, contrition, confidence in God, &c., she heard with great strenght and sweetness these words interiourly insinuated to her heart. Be Intire to me. At that she remain'd in great peace and quiet adhearing to our Lord, and immediately after Communion, she was incomposed as it were in with the Divine presence, whilst her soul remain'd in that state like to poverty of spirit, seperated from all things of this life. In an other place she expresses a new pain and great languishing thirst after God, from the feast of the Circumcision to the octave of St. Maurus (being St. Vincent and St. Anastatius Day) her whole soul and forces were in a kind of excess of mind breathing forth ardent acts and fervent Jaculations. Inviting all the whole world to serve, love and praise almighty God. On the feast of St. Paul's Conversion after she had communicated, the Saviour our Lord shut himself sacredly up in her heart as it were bolting himself within so as not to be seen, known, or hear'd to be there, and she came to understand that for reasons best known to himself he shut himself within her heart soe in that instant she conceiv'd and partly Experienc'd that the sensitive part of her soul was to be Depriv'd of much of those spiritual Guifts which heartofore his Goodness had so frequently vouchsaft her, at which Growing a little sad fearing she had offended our Lord, begging mercie, she found a great comfort at least that he was to be always within her very heart.

And so with fear, hope and thanksgiving, the time of recollection being Ended, after the sign, kneeling (at her departure) in the midst of the Quire, to adore the Bless'd Sacrament, she was given at that Instant to understand that as a shut Box of exquisite perfumes could not cast out its ordoreferous savour untill it was open'd, so when the time Expedient was expir'd he would open the treasures of his Goodness and power upon her soul such Excellent Savours as should cast the sweet odour upon many, at which she made an act of contrision, humility, gratitude, conformity and an intire oblation of her total all to his service and greater glory. Here we might produce many other feavours out of her own writings, but divers having been lent and so lost, others through her humility she caused to be burn before her death. There remains only to assure all posterity in the word of truth that all these feavours by her cooperating with them brought much fruit to the edification and example of every one; inciting them to praise and Glorify allmighty God who so liberally inrich'd her happy soul, which he had created to his Image, and compos'd it to so Good a temper, admirably connecting such opositis in such an harmonious concord of true regular vertue, for she was adorn'd with profound humility accompanied with a generous heart and a most Religious gravity mixt with cheerfullness a great reservedness joyn'd with a sweet affability, a more then ordinary wisdom, with such innocency a Strict poverty attended by a noble liberal charity. And indeed as concerning her practice of poverty it was singular in her, her ambition was to be meanly treated. And was soe because she would have it soe. In midst of Greatest affairs (insident to her state of superiority) she maintain'd God, a punctual silence and

recollection, so that solitude and prayer were the continual food that fed her pious soul. The Habits of humility was Grown so co-natural to her that in her Daly practices she beautifi'd all her actions. She expos'd a constant and heroically patience midst of Greatest suffrances, and in a manner still thirsting for more. She knew that it was God's holy pleasure many years before that she was as long as she liv'd not only to serve him but to suffer for him. An other time our Lord gave her suffrance as the Richest gift of his love, and she most resign'dly, courageously and joyfully took this pledge of his dearest affection; and according to the fourth degree of humility in our rule was never weary of suffering: for she suffered slanders, hard censures, deem'd a Dissembler, had Aridity, temptations, King's evil, consumption and other other corporal infirmitys, at last being worn to only skin and bone, confin'd to her bed, the sharpness of her fever (from April to August) consum'd the little remaining flesh so away, that the bones broke through in many places, having thereby a great Encrease of Torment by those several wounds, besides being tiner grown she was in a manner nail'd to her cross not being able to lye on either side. And to make her more conforme to her Dear Spouse and Saviour she experienced with him on the bed of her cross a certain confidence in his mercies and ardent Love uniting all in union of his Sacred passion. At last with most pious sence and true Devotion and Application she Receiv'd all the Rites of the holy Church, breathing forth aspirations In midst of pure Suffrance. A little before her Death Almighty God reveal'd to her some of his secrets, which she told to spiritual father which concern'd the Glory of God and Good of others. She hear'd also a celestial and melodious consort of bells, after which in midst of the prayers and sorrowfull Tears of her mourning children, she Dyed as she had lived, like a Saint, and was Buri'd with that honour Due to soo great a servant of Almighty God. Some years after her happy Death those Papers and Notes of hers were produced, out of which relation is abreviated, together with the assertion of those of her devout children who surviv'd her amongst many other comfortable particulars which credibly have been from time to time upon occasions related concerning her obtain'd favours for this holy community. One is what our Reverend Ghostly father had from her own relations; how our Lord Granted a happy death at her request in a recollection after Communion for all those of her charge then living: and to his Eternal praise honour and Glory, hitherto we have experienced the comfort of the same mercifull effect in the most pious and sweet Departure of every one that has Dyed in this Monastery. An other feavour told from one to another, was how this our dear lady Abbes saw all her Religious shroud'd under our blessed Lady's mantel as a sign of her perticular protection. A third that once humbly beging of our Lord to Grant her a foundation for this monastery, he sweetly made this Benign answer that his providence should be our foundation. She liv'd to profess and receive into this her beginning house a bout Thirty Persons, who all resented deeply to loose so Dear a mother, and so indulgent an Abbess, living but a year in the new little building she had made. Dedicating our monastery to the All Immaculate Conception of the Glorious Virgin Mary upon whose pure feast of Dedication cald ad Nives she sweetly Expired, at the same Hour when Christ our Lord rendred his Spirit into the hands of his Eternal father, at which hower she had a good custome of devoutly reciting five Paters and five Aves daly in the honnour of the five precious wounds of our dear redeemer, which

devotion by some pious good people was conceiv'd to be so acceptable to the rewarder of every Good act done in honour of the holy passion that he would have a memory of that perticular after her Death, express'd by the green sprig sprung in a very short time after her burial out of her grave bearing only 5 branches each one Grounded upon its several knot of that one stem, which was so un usual that no man of this town could Judge what it was, or like to be had it been suffered to grow on. Requiescat in pace. Amen.

No. 2.

Letter of King Philip of Spain giving permission for the Foundation at Ghent.

(From a copy in our possession, the original of which is presumably in the State Archives at Brussels, but this we have had no opportunity of proving).

Philippe par la Grace de Dieu Roi de Castille &c. à tous ceux qui les présentes verront, salut, reçu avons l'humble supplication et requête des Demoiselles Elisabeth et Marguerite Radcliffe, sœurs et autres leurs consortes filles Anglaises, contenant qu'elles ont grand zèle et désir de venir pardeça pour se rendre Religieuses de l'ordre de St. Benoît, mais d'autant que le monastère Anglais du meme ordre en cette meme ville de Bruxelles est déjà plein, et incapable d'y recevoir plus grand nombre de religieuses, elles nous ont très humblement supplie et réquis qu'il nous plait leur accorder et consentir, qu'elles puissent et pourront ériger un nouveau Monastère en meme Ville de gand, sans aucunement charger icelle Ville ou Pais en chose quelcouque, prenant égard que les dites suppliantes apporteront des moïens avec elles pour s'entretenir et faire les autres dépens nécessaires, de se leur faire dépêcher lettres en tel cas pertinentes, savoir faisons que nous les choses susdites considérées sur celles en l'avis tant de très reverend Pere en Dieu notre cher et fial L'Evêque de Gand, inclinons favorablement à leur supplication et requête des dites Elisabeth et Marguerite Radcliffe et autres leurs consortes suppliantes, leur avons permis, consenti et accordé, permettons, consentons et accordons en leur donnant congé et licence de Grace Spéciale par ces dites présentes qu'elles puissent et pourront ériger un nouveau Monastère en la dite Ville sans aucunement la charger, ou le païs en chose quelcouque, puisqu'elles devront apporter des moïens pour s'entretenir et faire les autres dépens nécessaires meme que le choix de la place se devra faire avec préalable communication de ceux du Magistrat, et avec le consentement d'icelui; ci-donnons en mandement à nos très chers et fiaux le chef president et Gens de notre conseil en Flandres aux dits ou Magistrat de la ville de Gand et à tous autres nos justiciers officiers et sujets auxquels se regardera que de cette notre Grace, permission, consentement et accord, les faisons, souffrent et laissent les dites suppliantes, pleinement et paisèblement jouir et user aux restrictions charges et conditions selon et en la forme et muniré que dit est, sans leur faire mettre ou donner ni souffrir etre fait, mis ou donné ou a l'avenir aucun trouble, de tout bien, ou empechement au contraire, car ainsi nous plait-il, en témoignage de quoi avons fait mettre notre scel à ces dites présentes.

Données en meme Ville de Bruxelles, le vingt cinquième jour de Septembre, l'an de grace mille six cent vingt trois, &c. de nos règnes le troisième.

Signé M. A. V.

(sur le replis était écrit) par le Roi en son conseil.

SOUSSIGNÉ DE GOTTIGINES.

No. 3.

Dimissorial letter given by the Archbishop of Mechlin to the Lady Abbess of Brussels, authorising the departure of the four foundresses to Ghent.

(From a translation kept at St. Mary's Abbey, East Bergholt.)

James by the grace of God and favour of the Apostolic See Archbishop of Mechlin and ordinary Superior of the Monastery of Our Lady of the English Nuns of St. Benedict founded in this city of Brussels.

We do by these presents give our Benediction and permission for our well-beloved daughters in God Dames Lucy Knatchbull, Eugenia Poulton, Magdalene Digby and Mary Roper, professed religious of the said Monastery, together with two novices, to go forth and repair to the city of Ghent, there to found a new Monastery of the same Order under the jurisdiction of the Right Rev. Bishop of that place, to whom we most earnestly recommend them, assigning them for superior, according to their own choice, until they shall arrive in that place, Dame Lucy Knatchbull. Holding them free, from this, from the obedience they have owed us to the present. On the express condition by them accepted that the said Religious shall take out of the said Monastery nothing whatsoever, either in pensions or annuities brought by them, or in any other form whatsoever, except what the Rev. Lady Abbess or the Convent may be willing to grant them. In testimony whereof we have signed this present with our name, and caused our seal to be affixed to it, in this said city of Brussels, on the 15th day of January 1624.

(Signed) JAMES ARCHBISHOP OF MECHLIN,

And underneath—By order of my Lord

(Signed) CORNSONIUS, Secretary.

No. 4.

APPARITION OF JOHN SHEARMAN.

(From a MS. written at Ghent and sent by Lady Mary Knatchbull to Rev. Hugh Tootell (Charles Dodd) in 1718. It is now in the possession of the "Old Brotherhood.")

A true and faithful Relation of y^e soul of John Shearman as it happen'd to a Religious in y^e English Monastery of y^e holy Order of St. Benedict in Gant, whose name was Aloysia German in y^e year of our Lord 1636 on y^e third of March.

John Shearman coming often to my Aunt Whiting's house on account of business and observing him to be a man of very good life, I had a great compassion of his

being a heretick and often said to my Aunt 'tis pity so good a soul should perish, but she in respect of his simplicity and y^e danger I might incurr by being known to use any means for his conversion thought it not fitt I shou'd use any means for his conversion or speak to him touching Religion, yet one day as I had occasion to pass by his house wth my Aunt I intreated her to visit him, but were told by his wife he was so sick we cou'd not see him, I departed and came again next day & speaking to him of Religion according to my ability I found him very well affected to be a Catholick as some of his parents had been but he being brought up with an heretick Uncle had no thought of any other yⁿ w^t he profest and bred him up in, & withall he told me also y^t he had divers times of late thought to have inform'd himself in points of Religion, but never cou'd meet wth one y^t cou'd speak to him of it, & therefore he heartily thank'd me for doing him y^t charity. With all y^s I acquainted one Father Alexander Baker who yⁿ lived wth Captain Reed in long acker att my return who went as a Physician 3 or 4 times to prepare him for his confession and reconciliation but for some respects he thought it not fitt himself to hear his confession and therefore recommended y^s care to Mr. Trevis, whom I brought as a Doctour to y^e sick man upon St. Ignatius his day according to y^e Roman account, we found him accompanied wth his wife and a Puritan son, whom we sent wth his Mother from long Acker where y^e sick man was to cheapside to fetch some herbs prescrib'd by y^e Physician for a medicine, for y^e greatest pain he complain'd of was in his side and these herbs were such as were good to lay to his side now in y^e meantime y^t y^e were gon Mr. Trevis heard his confession w^{ch} he had fully ended, & receiv'd absolution by their return then I found a new errand to send ym out w^{ch} gave further oportunity for his receiving more instructions, two days after I began my journey for these countreys, leaving y^e care of y^s good man to Mr. Baker and Mr. Trevis who shortly after my arrival here, gave me notice of his Death, as also of their having visited him in y^e small time he lived after my coming away, towards y^e end of October last in y^e year 1635 every night duely as I went to my prayers I heard three distinct knocks given as I thought att my cell door & y^s frequently I often after bideing come in went to see who was there suposeing some one to light a candle but found no body, w^{ch} I sometimes wonder'd att, but past it over thinking myself sometimes mistaken but att last being much affrighted I acquainted my Mrs. of Novices wth it but she assured me it was nothing but apprehension I endeavoured to conform myself though wth much difficulty till y^e third of March 1636 wⁿ according to y^e usual custom as I was praying in company wth another y^e said heard three knocks were distinctly heard by us both presently after being in bed wth my curtains drawn close on y^e right side, I heard and saw y^m thrown open wherewth I was exceedingly frightened & called for my Mrs. who drew y^e curtains again & sprinkelt y^e bed wth holy water & encourag'd me not to fear and so departed, in her absence I heard & saw y^e curtains drawn again & awhile after she coming to visit me & finding y^e curtains which she had drawn close together cast open she drew y^m close again & with another of y^e Religious set herself to prayer leaning on my bedside, & immediately they both heard and saw the curtains wth great violence rush'd open, & looking they saw nothing, but y^e curtains wide open, after w^{ch} no more was heard that night, y next day I

acquainted my Lady Abbess and Father Vincent wth w^t had past & they advis'd me y^e next time I heard such things to speak to it, instructing me in what manner I shou'd do it.

Next night about nine o'clock, being praying before my Oratory wth two Religious appointed to watch wth me, we all heard y^e accustomed three knocks att y^e door as we thought, but proved as it seems att y^e side of my Oratory, of w^{ch} y^e Religious y^t sate next me w^{ch} was my Lady y^a Dame Mary Knatchbull y^e other Dame Winefred Smyth, a third by y^e time was come in w^{ch} was Dame Ursula Butler, y^e next y^t sate by me as aforesaid observing there cou'd be no natural cause, she said if God will permit y^a enter, & I in y^e mean time taking into my hand y^e Image of Our Blessed Lady & signing myself wth y^e sign of y^e Cross & all sweating & trembling for fear, said, in y^e name of y^e father, y^e Son and Holy Ghost what art thou & wherefore comest thou to me? I not seeing anything heard a voice reply, I am y^e soul of Jhon Shearman be not afraid for I will not hurt y^a but am sent by our B. Lady to y^a because none can help me but y^a five masses I require and had y^a sooner spoken to me I had sooner been att rest, y^a I answer'd & will five serve y^r turn & wⁿ they are said shall y^a be at rest, y^e voice reply'd yes, I will, said I, by y^e grace of God procure y^m for y^a; y^a said y^e voice, I had but two more nights to come to y^a in w^{ch} time if y^a had (not) spoken to me I shou'd have staid in purgatory God knows how long, our B. Lady has procur'd y^t I should come because having sometimes heard her ill spoken of I did in my heart defend her, y^a I asked where he was, and he said hear att y^e end of y^r Oratory, is y^s all said I, he reply'd yes, y^a I bid him in y^e name of y^e Father, son & Holy Ghost after w^{ch} all was quiet. Early y^e next morning my Lady Eugenia Poulton sent to y^e Coledge to procure four masses for y^e rest of his soul & order'd y^e fifth shou'd be said in our Church by F^r Vincent our confessor, who celebrated att eight o'clock & I being at his Mass about y^e offertory saw ye soul of Jhon Shearman, wth a very pleasant countenance in a loose white garment stand on y^e epistle side of y^e Alter where upon I call'd my Lady suposeing she might have seen him, her Ld^{sp} wth divers others look'd into y^e Church, but cou'd not see him, yet to my sight he continu'd there all y^e time of Mass & seem'd to give way wⁿ y^e Clark approach'd y^e Alter, att y^e elevation kneeling down he seem'd with great reverence to adore y^e B^d Sacrament & a little after ye B^d Sacrament passing through y^e Street to some sick person he again adored wth a profound inclination but did not kneel down. I was spoken to by one of y^e Religious to beg his prayers for obtaining her a happy death w^{ch} I did, & y^e soul reply'd y^r House is so pleasing to Almighty God & his B^d Mother y^t none shall dye in it without a happy Death & for y^r Lady Abbess because she communicates every Saturday in honour of our B^d Lady, our Lady attends upon her att y^e time of comunion I desir'd him to pray for me & another of y^e Religious he answer'd, I will pray for y^a and for all and as for myself he said I shou'd have great difficulty to go forward yet I shou'd not go out although I came over not wth an intention to come hither which indeed was true, for till I came on y^e side y^e sea I intended for Antwerp, by y^e time Mass being fully ended, he made a low reverence to y^e Alter & I saw him no more, he seem'd to me to have y^e same countenance as when I saw him in England but towards y^e end of Mass it seem'd much more beautifull and pleasant to Behold.

No. 5.

Statement made by the Lady Abbess, Mary Roper, at an Episcopal Visitation of the Monastery, on the 23rd of February, 1646.

(From the original document in the Episcopal Archives at Ghent).

Rationes redditoe a Dña Abbatissa status Temporalis Monasterii Dominarum Anglarum Ordinis S. Benedicti in visitatione facta ab Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Episcopo Gandensi mense Feb. 1646.

Status Temporalis Monasterii prout erat quando Dña Abbatissa primo suscepit illius administrationem 11 Dec. 1642.

ANNUI REDITUS.

Ex Capitali 58,500 floren. in Anglia et 6,000 hic Gandavi percipiebat
Monasterium annue - - - - - fl. 5,035

ANNUA ONERA

Onera quibus gravabatur Monasterium erant pro fl. 30,000 acceptis
a Dño Hobroucke ad fabricam domus et pro aliis quibusdam
provisionibus - - - - - fl. 5,841

Debebat etiam aliis creditoribus summam semel solvendum - - fl. 4,000

integra sum: - - - - - fl. 9,841

Reditus annui cum Capitali - - - - - 63,535

Onera cum Capitali - - - - - 39,841

Superabunt onera - - - - - 23,694

Status rei Temporalis Monasterii prout fuit singulis annis a 10 Dec. 1642 usque ad 23 Feb. 1646.

ACCEPTA ANNUE

Ex Anglia - - - - - Nihil.

Pro Novitiis et Convictoribus - - - - - fl. 6,260

Pro Censu Capitalis Gandavi expositi- - - - - 0,375

Pro flosculis aliisque arte factis - - - - - 1,000

Integra summa - - - - - 7,635

EXPOSITA ANNUE.

Pro Sustentatione Domesticarum - - - - - 13,000

Accepta - - - - - fl. 7,635

Exposita - - - - - 13,000

Superant exposita - - - - - 5,365

Credita monasterii hoc tempore sunt - - - - - fl. 18,720

Debita sunt - - - - - 21,845

Superant - - - - - 3,125

Infra spatium triennii accesserunt ad Capitale omnium redituum annorum hujus Monasterii per dotes trium Religiosarum hoc tempore professarum et pro legacia - - - - -	16,000
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HABET IN PRÆSENTI HOC MONASTERIUM.

Pro summa Capitali omnium redituum annorum - - - - -	80,500
Summa debitorum - - - - -	61,686
Residuum Capitalis - - - - -	18,814

TRANSLATION OF THE ABOVE.

Temporal state of the monastery when the Lady Abbess first undertook its administration, December 11th, 1642.

YEARLY INCOME.

From the capital, 58,500 florins invested in England and 6,000 here in Ghent, the monastery received every year - - - - -	fl. 5,035
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YEARLY DEBTS.

The debts which burthened the monastery, for the fl. 30,000 received from Mr. Hobroucke for the building of the house, and certain other requirements, annually - - - - -	fl. 5,841
To other creditors was owing - - - - -	4,000
Total - - - - -	9,841

Yearly income with capital - - - - -	fl. 63,535
Liabilities with capital - - - - -	39,841

Surplus after paying debts - - - - -	23,694
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Temporal state of the monastery as it has been every year from December 10th, 1642, to the 23rd February, 1646.

RECEIVED EVERY YEAR.

From England - - - - -	Nothing.
From Novices and Pensioners - - - - -	fl. 6 260
Interest on money invested in Ghent - - - - -	0 375
For flowers and fancy work - - - - -	1,000
Total - - - - -	7,635

YEARLY EXPENDITURE.

Maintenance of the household - - - - -	fl. 13 000
Received - - - - -	fl. 7,635
Expended - - - - -	13,000
Surplus of expenditure - - - - -	5,365

Debts owing to the monastery at present - - - - -	fl. 18,720
Owing from the monastery - - - - -	21,845

Surplus of debt - - - - -	3,125
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Within the space of three years the capital of the yearly income of this monastery has been increased by the portions of three nuns lately professed, and a legacy, to the amount of fl. 16,000.

At the present time this monastery has as capital for its yearly	
revenue - - - - -	fl. 80,500
Total of debts - - - - -	61,686
Residue of capital - - - - -	18,814

No. 6.

Letter of the Prioress, Dame Mary Knatchbull, to the Bishop of Ghent, announcing the death of the Lady Abbess Mary Roper.

(From the original, preserved in the Episcopal Archives at Ghent).

Illustrissime ac Reverendissime Domine,

Heri circa meridiem placuit Deo, inter lacrymas nostras et preces, evocare ex hac vita ad meliorem charissimam nobis Abbatissam et Matrem D. Mariam Roper; cui paulo ante mortem inter alia suspiria illud frequens erat, "O si mihi liceret Rev^{mum} ac dilectissimum Patrem meum videre et ab ejus manu benedictionem pro me meisque accipere! cæterum quoniam illa honorum operum suorum plena meritis jam discessit, nosque orphanas reliquit, quid aliud agendum superest quam ad Rev^{mam} Dominationem vestram confugere, quæ nunquam huic Monasterio defuit, sed præter abundantem optimi Præsulis providentiam, superimpendit nobis charitatem etiam Patris.

Moris est in hoc Monasterio (et ad id Statuta nostra obligant) ut mortua Abbatissa, post ejus funeralia absoluta, quam primum recolligant se Moniales ad tres dies ut in silentio cum Deo agant de eligenda nova abbatissa: quibus finitis quarta die fit electio, præsentē et omnia moderante Reverendissimo Antistite. Dignetur Rev^{ma} Dominatio vestra rem hanc, tanti apud nos momenti, pro sua in nos charitate disponere, et prout Rev^{mæ} Dominationis vestræ occasiones fuerint monere, quatenus omnia accomodari possint, ad votum Rev^{mæ} Dominationis vestræ, nos interim instabimus orationibus et pœnitentiis debitis pro obtinenda Sancti Spiritus singulari gratia, ut omnia succedant ad honorem Dei, ad satisfactionem Rev^{mæ} Dominationis vestræ, et bonum hujus Monasterii.

Quod ut melius fiat, assidue oramus Deum quatenus dignetur Rev^{mam} Dominationem vestram Ecclesiæ suæ nobisque in primis servare diu incolumem.

Datum in Monasterio nostro Gandavi die 21 Aprilis anno 1650.

Illustrissimæ et Reverendissimæ Dom: vestræ

Humillima in Christo Ancilla et Filia

MARIA KNATCHBULL,

Indigna Priorissa.

No. 7.

*List of the Chapter, drawn up for the election of the fourth Abbess of Ghent,
April 27th, 1650.*

(From the original, preserved in the Episcopal Archives at Ghent).

Nomina, Ætas, Tempus Professionis et officia præstita a monialibus Anglis S. Benedicti, Gandavi.

- D. Maria Knatchbull, Priorissa, annum agens ætatis 40, Professionis 22. Gessit se laudabiliter in officio Curatricis Rotæ, Præfectæ et Locutorii, Novitiarum Magistræ, Decanæ, Consultricis et Priorissæ quod modo præstat.
- D. Magdalena Digby, Decana, annum agens ætatis 64, Professionis 40. Consultrix; laudabiliter se gessit in officiis Priorissæ, Cellariæ, Procuratricis, Ædituæ, Præfectæ Infirmariæ, et in præsentî Decanæ et Consultricis.
- D. Gertrudis Lawson annum &c., 46, Prof. 25; laudabiliter præstitit officia Priorissæ, Ædituæ, Præfectæ Infirmariæ, et in præsentî Decanæ et Consultricis.
- D. Ignatia Fortescue, an. 35, prof. 18. Gessit se laudabiliter in officio Præfectæ Chori et in præsentî Decanæ et Consultricis.
- D. Anna Nevil, an. 42, prof. 16. Laudabiliter se gessit in officiis Procuratricis, Magistræ Novitiarum, et in præsentî Decanæ et Cons.
- D. Catharina Wigmore, an. 54, prof. 25. Laudabiliter se gessit in officiis Priorissæ, Cellariæ, Decanæ, Consultricis, et in præsentî Magistræ Novitiarum.
- D. Paula Knatchbull, an. 42, prof. 23. Laudabiliter se gessit in officiis Portariæ, Custodis Vestium, Præfectæ Infirmariæ, Procuratricis, Præfectæ Chori, Decanæ, Consultricis, et in præsentî Cellariæ.
- D. Maria Mounson, an. 48, prof. 20. Laudabiliter se gessit in Officiis Cellariæ, Præfectæ Infirmariæ, Decanæ et Consultricis.
- D. Lucia Parkins, an. 43, prof. 19. Laudabiliter se gessit in Officiis Ædituæ et Custodis Vestium.
- D. Benedicta Lawson, an. 41, prof. 19. Laudabiliter se gessit in Officio Portariæ.
- D. Elizabetha Markham, an. 38, prof. 19. Laudabiliter se gessit in Officiis Ædituæ, Præfectæ Chori et in præs. Infirmariæ.
- D. Mecthilda Plomptin, an. 36, prof. 18. Laudabiliter se gessit in Officio Portariæ.
- D. Barbara Fortescue, an. 33, prof. 16. Laudabiliter se gessit in Officiis Portariæ et Procuratricis.
- D. Flavia Cary, an. 33, prof. 16. Præfecta Chori.
- D. Marina Beaumont, an. 33, prof. 13.
- D. Winefrida Smith, an. 46, prof. 15. Laudabiliter se gessit in Officiis Curatricis Rotæ, Custodis Vestium et in præs. Portariæ.
- D. Cornelia Corham, an. 34, prof. 15. Laudabiliter se gessit in Officio Ædituæ.
- D. Ursula Butler, an. 28, prof. 13.
- D. Aloysia German, an. 43, prof. 13.
- D. Constantia Savage, an. 28, prof. 12. In præsentî laudabiliter se gerit in Officio Ædituæ.

- D. Dorothea Cary. an. 27, prof. 12.
 D. M. Ignatia Coningsby an. 68, prof. 12.
 D. Margareta Marckham an. 28, prof. 11. Custos est vestium.
 D. Eugenia Thorold, an. 27, prof. 11. Laudabiliter se gerit in præsentī in officio Curatricis Rotæ.
 D. Christiana Forster, an. 80, prof. 10.
 D. Francisca Roper, an. 27, prof. 9.
 D. Teresia Gardiner, an. 60, prof. 8.
 D. Monica Bartlett, an. 48, prof. 8. In præ: laudabiliter se gerit in Officio Procuratricis.
 D. Philippa Simeons, an. 26, prof. 8.
 D. Scholastica Hennadge, an. 23, prof. 6.
 D. Francisca Carrington, an. 23, prof. 5.
 D. Augustina Titchburne, an. 38, prof. 5.
 D. Aldegundis Finch, an. 35, prof. 4.
 D. Alexia Morice, an. 21, prof. 3.
 D. M. Joseph Lawson, an. 29, prof. 2.
 D. Helena Wayt, an. 35, prof. 2.
 D. Maria Bedingfield, an. 22, prof. 2.
 D. Maria Minshall, an. 24, prof. 1.
 D. Placida de Uloa, an. 28, prof. 1.
 D. Maria Caril, an. 20, prof. 1.
 D. Agnes Wakeman, an. 22, prof. 1.

No. 8.

Appeal to the Citizens of Ghent.

(Copied from a MS. in our Archives which bears no date, but which, from the paper and style of writing, etc., must be of considerable antiquity. We may assign to it the date of about 1643 to 1647).

AN ACCOUNT OF YE NECESSITYS OF YE COMUNITY.

Being humbly to expose unto the charity of y^e citty the distress of our comunity, wee desire it may be in the first place understood and considered y^t this greate poverty hath ocured through no eccess of ours, but from the comon calamity of o^r Nation, or rather in way of suffering for justice, as being Religious and the children of Catholikes from whom the uniust lawes of England now violently executed takes all their temporall fortunes.

It is true wee were admitted to seate ourselves in this towne on condission of drawing no burthen on the citty through our want of Temporallityes, to comply wherewth we have been carefull to admitt none to proffess for the quire who were not of good extraction and furnished wth compitent portions. Our portions and yearly incomes wee settled in England for the reasons following, greate advantage in the Rent of moneyes w^{ch} in a manner yealds double w^t they doe heere. 2. England was then in Peace and so like to continue. This Country in warr and yearly danger of falling into Enimy

hands. The persons entrusted wth o^r Moneyes are y^e most Noble and wealthy Catholikes of England, and their lands tyed for y^e security. All wth Provident forecasts by o^r selves and friends aplied for o^r best advantage in order to o^r obligation to the citty, it hath pleased Almighty God to frustrate by the cevill discords of our miserable country. Our Rents in England are wholly suspended, so that wee have not received a penny for any Capitall there this 4 yeares. Our friends and all English Catholikes so impoverished as hardly can they subsist themselves, much less impart to us any reliefe. Our Company very greate and of tender education. Our debts for these last yeares subsistence many. Our provitions of Corne, Woode, Butter, Candles and all other necessarys for this yeare wholly to be made, whilst we have neither mony nor credit to supply our wants. The remedy of this distress wee humbly present to y^e most discrete and charitable considerations, that hereby order may be taken for o^r participation of the comon Allmes and disbursements of the citty to good uses, whereof this will not be the less for meritt and glory both with God and men in a time of such pressing necessity to concurr to the reliefe of a comunity of virgins exilled and fallen into poverty for the only cause of Religion. Wee hope the burthen will not be of long continuance, when it shall please God to dispose the discords of England; howsomever the renowne and meritt of so good a worke will be Eternall to this citty, and so will our obligation to pray dayly for all that concurr therein.

No. 9.

Letter of the Bishop of Boulogne.

(The following letter bears neither signature nor date; we may assign it with probability to about A.D. 1653. The original is preserved in the Episcopal Archives at Ghent).

Desir de M. l'Eveque de Bologne et resolution dernier et inébranlable.

Pour l'establisement des Dames Benedictines Angloises a Bologne Monseigneur l'Eveque demande que la caution des deux mil livres de rente annuelle qui doibt servir de fond à leur establisement s'oblige pour tant et jusqu'à ce que les d^{tes} Dames auront trouvé en fond de pareil revenu annuel dont mon dict Seigneur soit content et qu'il ait accepté soit en terres ou en rentes, ou en Banques, pourveu que ce soit au lieu ou on puisse avoir action, contre ceux qui seroient en demeure, ou refusant de les payer.

Et pour respondre aux propositions faites par les dites Dames, sur ce que dessus mon dict Seig^r l'Eveque entend.

1. Que leur establisement soit stable et permanent et qu'ayant une foi esté faict ce soit pour tousjours et à perpétuité sans qu'il puisse estre libre aux dames de quitter la ville de Bologne pour passer en quelqu'autre lieu que ce puisse estre, et en sorte mesme que celles qui entreront dans la première closture y demeureront toute leur vie, selon le veu de stabilité de l'ordre de Saint Benoit.

2. Que le nombre de Religieuses professés qui commenceront cest establisement y comprises les Converses, et si les dittes Dames desirent y en adjouter quelques unes de plus, elles adjouteront aussi au presdict fond de deux mil livres la somme de deux cents livres de Rente viagere pour chascune de celles qui excéderont le susdict nombre de dix.

3. Que le susdict fonds de deux mil livres de rente sera inalienable et que les dittes dames ne pourront le vendre ni engager pour quelque cause que ce puisse estre ni mesme faire aucune emprunte sur jceluy, mais demeurara tousjours et a perpetuité a leur Monastere de Bologne, franc et net de toutes hypoteques outre ce dont le dict monastere pourra profiter par la reception et les dots des filles.

No. 10.

Brief of Pope Alexander VII. in confirmation of the Statutes.

(From an old English translation kept in our archives. The translation is not dated, but from the writing and appearance of the paper it cannot be much more recent than the Brief itself, of which the Latin original has been lost. Outside the document is written "The Popes Breve of y^e Confirmation of our Statutes Englished").

ALEXANDER PP. VII.

For Future Memory. Whereas our beloved daughters in Christ, the Abbess and Nuns of the Order of St. Bennet of the English nation, in the city of Gant have procur'd lately to be signified unto us that they have certaine particular constitutions, made long since for the happy government of the Monastery of the Religious thereof, approved by the Ordinary of the place, and now by use and custome received, to the end they may more firmly subsist, have earnestly desired our Appostolicall confirmation. We, desiring to do them a speciall favour, absolving each of their persons in particular, and judging them absolved by the tenor of the present from all kind of Ecclesiasticall sentences, censures and penalties of Excommunication, Suspension and interdict upon what occasion or cause soever they may have bin inflicted, either by the law, or any man in authority, to the end they may obtaine the effect of this Brief, being inclined hereunto, at the instance of those who humbly presented unto us this request in their names, provided that the foresaid Constitutions as is pretended have bin approved by the Ordinary of Gant, be in use lawfull, and containe nothing in them repugnant to the holy Canons and Decrees of the Councell of Trent, or to Appostolicall Constitutions, nor anything contrary to the Regular Institute of the aforesaid Order confirmed by Appostolicall authority. We doe by the tenor of the present approve and confirme them by Appostolicall authority, and give unto them the strength of an inviolable Appostolicall stableness, and supply all and every defect of law, or fact, in case any by any meanes whatsoever have intervean'd. Decreeing that this Brief shall alwaies remaine efficacious firme and valid and be inviolably observed by those whom it concerns, and that al Judges w^tsoever Ordinaries and Delegates, and even the Auditors of the Pope's pallace shal so judge and define in the aforesaid matters, and that w^t soever shall be otherwyse attempted wittingly or unwittingly by any one (of) w^t authority soever, shall be void and of no effect, not wth standing any general or particular Constitutions and ordinations. priveleges and grants to the contrary, sett forth, granted, confirmed, and resolved in any manner w^t soever by Apostolical, Generall and Provinciall Councells and Synods to all wth and every one in particular,

fully sufficiently expressing the tenor of them in this present Breef, the others remaining in their vigour, we do especially and expressly derogate, and to all others contrary w^t soever. Dated at Rome at S^t Mary Maior's under the Fisher's ring the eight day of June 1658.

PONTŪS NOSTRI ANNO QUARTO.

No. 11.

Statement of the Temporals and Spirituals of the Monastery made to the Bishop of Ghent by the Lady Mary Knatchbull, Abbess. A.D. 1655.

(From the original document preserved in the Episcopal Archives at Ghent.)

Uti ratio officii mei postulat, humillime nunc propono Rev^{mo}. Dño Episcopo tam spiritualement quam temporalem Monasterii nostri statum.

Numerus familiæ nostræ 79 personas complectitur, 40 professas pro choro, 16 sorores laicas, 6 novitias et scholasticas pro Choro, Capellanos 2, tres famulos, et convictrices 12. Annuæ expensæ Domus nostræ hisce jam quinque annis quibus ego Abbatissæ munere functa sum (si cuilibet anno æqua sumptum ratio assignetur) sunt 12,000 fl. per annum, includendo expensas omnes sive quod in Templum sive quæ in famulorum mercedem et in alios omnes necessarios usus faciendæ sunt: quæ si per capita dividantur singulorum expensæ annuæ paululum super 150 fl. ascendunt.

Ad hæc dissolvenda (omnibus pecuniis nostris in Anglia vel plane perditis vel nullum redditum iniquitate temporis redentibus ad summam 100,000 fl.) ex novitiarum, Scholasticarum, et convictricium pensionibus, ex eleemosynis, ex labore nostro et industria accepimus quovis anno 8,000 fl., adeoque his 5 annis plus pecuniarum expendimus quam recepimus ad summam 20,000 fl.

Ad hæc æquanda, recuperavi ex pecuniis debitis monasterio 9,000 fl. Reliquum sumpsit ex dotibus a me acceptis, ut inferius patebit.

Quando primum ad hoc officium electa sum, inveni debita Monasterii ea quæ hic subjicio: 35,000 fl. Dño Hobrouck pro quorum interesse solvebantur annue 2,187 fl. Aliis amicis debebantur 12,300 fl. pro quibus etiam solvebatur interesse. Aliis creditoribus pro expensis domus ordinariis currentibus 10,500 fl. pro interesse pecuniæ 10,300 fl. In universum 68,100 fl.

Ex quo fui Abbatissa accepi in Dotibus pro novitiis professis 36,000 fl. e quibus solvi Dño Hobrouck fl. 20,000 ex sua Capitali (et composui cum illo pro arrearigis interesse præteritis et futuris, pacto inter nos inito mense Julii 1654) ex aliis debitis ob pecunias ad interesse acceptas facta est solutio 3,000 fl. In providendis familiæ necessariis 11,000 fl. Reliqua ad solvenda debita. Translatum est Capitale 6,000 fl. in hac urbe pro solutione æquatis summæ pecuniæ acceptæ a Monasterio ad interesse: eaque ratione nunc solvuntur a Monasterio tantum 90 fl. per annum pro interesse.

	fl.
Summa ergo debitorum initio muneris a me suscepti fuit - - -	68,100
Summa pecuniæ a me acceptæ - - - - -	85,000
„ expensarum in familia - - - - -	60,000
Soluta ex debitis D. Hobrouck - - - - -	20,000

	fl.
Alia debita soluta - - - - -	5,000
Translata pro solutione debiti Capitale - - - - -	6,000
Ex pacto cum D. Hobrouck inito per arrearigis non solutis dati -	14,000
Remanserunt debita - - - - -	30,000

e quibus 15,000 Dño Hobrouck, reliqua debentur aliis creditoribus.

Unum Capitale in Anglia sine ullo fructu—100,000.

Jam quod attinet ad statum spiritualem monasterii curatur prospici in victu, vestitu, ceterisque quibuscumque necessariis quidquid regula præscribit, ut ea ratione majori vigore et suavitate quidquid ab eadem regula ad religiosæ disciplinæ observantiam præcipitur exigi possit.

Non invenitur, Dei gratia, defectus notabilis nec universim in communitate nec in ulla quidem particulari persona: nec ulla regula aut statutum, quantumvis leve, aut negligitur ut illius frequens transgressum non multetur, adhibitis etiam idoneis pro emendatione industriis et pœnitentiæ quidem ab omnibus alacriter acceptantur, unde nullus in virtute defectus seu regressus, sed profectus et progressus fit in disciplina regulari.

Singularis cura adhibetur circa omnia quæ necessaria sunt ægrotantibus, et licet hic magnæ expensæ fiant, tamen cum regula id jubeat non possum non sperare divinæ Providentiæ subsidium.

Nonnullæ etiam expensæ pro templo fiunt, instituto tamen nostro convenientes. Et omnes horæ divini Officii exacte observantur, uti etiam Capitula hebdomadaria, nisi fortassis quandoque valde justis de causis in hac re dispensetur.

Confitentur omnes Confessario ordinario nullique alteri: et statis temporibus acceptantur extraordinarii a Rev^{mo} Dño approbati. Unde experimur magnam sequi pacem et unionem in Monasterio; ne tamen hac in parte ullum cuius necessarium desit solatium, significavi omnibus nomine Rev^{mi} Domini Episcopi ut quæcumque desiderat confessarium extraordinarium et difficultatem habeat, quacumque ex causa, id a me petendi, per litteras recurrat ad Rev^{num} Dominum Episcopum vel Rev. D. Officalem: quod cum magna grati animi significatione exceperunt.

Charitas et veri ejusdem effectus magno animorum fervore conservantur et vigent in Monasterio, atque ut augeantur etiam in dies, experientia docemur se mutuas statis horis recreationes et liberum subditarum ad superiores recursum plurimum juvare.

Nihil aliud occurrit in spirituali aut temporali statu Monasterii quo diutius Rev^{mam} Dominationem tuam detineam; si quid vero aliud Rev^{mo} Domino petendum vel præcipiendum videatur, in eis executioni mandandis promptissima erit

R^{me} Dom^{onis} suæ obedientissima

et humillima filia et serva

MARIA KNATCHBULL,

Abbatissa indigna.

[*Translation of the above.*]

In accordance with the duty of my office, I now humbly lay before the Most Rev. Lord Bishop the state of our Monastery both spiritual and temporal.

Our family numbers 79 persons, 40 professed for the choir, 16 lay-sisters, 6 novices and scholars for the choir, two chaplains, three servants and twelve boarders. The yearly

expenses of our house, during these five years that I have held the office of Abbess (if we assign an equal sum to each year) are 12,000 florins, including all expenses for the church, for servants' wages and every other necessity: which, if divided among all, may be calculated at a little more than 150 florins per head. To meet these expenses (it being understood that the sum of 100,000 florins invested in England is either quite lost, or at any rate bringing nothing in, owing to the troubles of the times) we have received every year from the pensions of the novices, scholars and boarders, in alms, and by our own labour and industry, 8,000 florins a year; so that, during these five years, we have expended more than we have received to the amount of 20,000 florins.

To make this good I have obtained 9,000 florins of debts due to the Monastery; the rest I have taken from the portions received by me, as will be seen below.

When first elected to this office, I found the Monastery burthened by the following debts:—35,000 fl. to Mr. Hobrouck, on which a yearly interest was being paid to the amount of 2,187 fl.: To other friends were due 12,800 fl. for which also interest was being paid.

To other creditors for the ordinary expenses of the house 10,500 fl.: for interest 10,300. In all 68,100 fl.

Since I have been Abbess I have received in portions for novices professed 36,000 fl., from which I have paid Mr. Hobrouck 20,000 towards the amount due to him (and I have made an arrangement with him for the past arrears and the interest for the future, by an agreement made between us in the month of July 1654). Of the other debts, by means of money received as interest 3,000 florins have been paid. 11,000 florins have been expended in providing for the necessities of our household; the rest in paying debts. Our investment of 6,000 fl. in this city has been transferred for the payment of an equal sum borrowed by the Monastery on interest. Hence, the Monastery is now paying only 90 fl. a year as interest.

	fl.
The sum, therefore, of the debts when I entered upon office was-	- 68,100
Money received by me - - - - -	- 85,000
Expended on the household - - - - -	- 60,000
Paid towards Mr. Hobrouck's debt - - - - -	- 20,000
Other debts paid - - - - -	- 5,000
Transferred for payment of capital of debt - - - - -	- 6,000
Paid by agreement to Mr. Hobrouck for arrears - - - - -	- 14,000
Debts still owing - - - - -	- 30,000,

of which 15,000 are due to Mr. Hobrouck, and the rest to other creditors.

Capital in England from which nothing is received—100,000.

N.B. The statement regarding the spiritual state of the Monastery is translated in the body of the book, so we need not repeat it here.

No. 12.

Letters of the Lady Abbess Mary Knatchbull to the Bishop of Ghent, about the profession of three novices, and the discharge of the debt to M. Hobrouck.

(The originals are in the Episcopal Archives at Ghent, and are in such bad preservation—the handwriting too being difficult—that some words cannot be deciphered.)

My Lord,

According to my duty I come now to inform your Lordship that our 3 novices S^{ter}. Dorothy Morgan, S^{ter}. Anne Pormy* and S^{ter}. Martha Kemp have compleated there year of probation and therein given full satisfaction to me and comunity so that according to the Constitutions of our Monastery the votes of Chapter have passed down for their Per † Sister Dorothy Morgans and S^{ter}. Ann Pordages portions (400 sterling a per . . .) I have received towards the Maintenance of our Monastery which subsists by the portions of such as profess amongst us. Sister Martha Kemps portion (400—sterling also) is in Boul . . . a capital putt out by Mr. Mathew Beddingfelds at . . . England for it. The Rent duly paid at . . . and Christmas 250 fls. a year. So that wee have still satisfaction in all that concernes both spiritual and temporal. Your Lordship will be pleased to understand that upon account of our building, a great debt was contracted by our Monastery with M. Lewis van Hobrouck of Gaunt, for the Soon after my coming to be Abbess I entered into an obligation with him according to the tenor of the enclosed paper wich when your Lordship hath perused and the account of all the said debt payd wanting only 2400 flo, which I am now ready to discharge before the next profession. I beseech your Lordship to send for Mr. Hobrouck (the heir of M. Lewis van Hobrouck) and cause him to make a legall acknowledgment wereby the Monastery may be entirely discharged of this debt and the obligation cancelled which was first made (whereof I have sent Your Lordship a copy) and this letter to stand in form wherof Mr. Hobrouck has the original signed by me.

It is your Lordship concern for your poore children not to permitt them to be injured or oppressed, and so I humbly comitt the care of this affair to your charity. The official with whose approbation I made this last contract with Mr. Hobrouck can wittness that he was fully agreeing to it, and that it hath been complied with as I have . . . in the enclosed paper. I humbly ask your Lordship pardon for this trouble and your holy benediction for

My Lord

this first of April, 1661,

Your Lordships
most dutifull and obedient daughter,

MARY KNATCHBULL,

Abbess unworthy.

I have sent for M. Hobrouck to come to me that I may lett him know I am ready to pay this money and do desire his generall discharge according to

* Pordage.

† Profession.

the last agreement, so your Lordship may be pleased not to call for him till you know from me how he is disposed.

My Lord,

I have spoken with M. Hobrouck who saith he is ready for his part to make good his fathers agreement but his Brother-in-Law and the rest of his children make difficulty in it and require more of the aer——*. Yett they are all content to stand to your Lordship and Mons^r. Offissialls Arbitramont and so to conclude the affair as you shall find most reasonable and to this end they will waite on your Lordship at what hower you shall appoint with their accounts and widnesses, and att this same time Mr. Gerard and our Doctor will also wait on your Lordship on my part to pay in or give s—— (security?) for payment of the money adjudged close (?) The father and mother of S^r (Ann Pordage) comes purposely out of England to be at this profession and back again by the Kings coronation, so that this profession must be necessarily on Easter Tuesday which obliges me to beseek your Lordship to hasten the dispatch of this business with M. Hobrouck as soon as is possible with† will give much ease to the thoughts of

My Lords

most dutifull and obedient daughter,

MARY KNATCHBULL,

Abbess unworthy.

I must humbly thank your Lordship for the noble charity you have been pleased to send us of 150 fls. towards our building. The prayers of our whole community shall implore God's mercy for y^r Loth liberal reward,

This 5 of April, 1661.

No. 13.

Charitable Appeal of the Bishop of Ghent, A.D. 1669.

(From the original document in the Episcopal Archives.)

Eugène Albert par la grace de Dieu et du Siege Apostolique Eveque de Gand, Comte de Brandeville, et d'Eveghem, &c.

A tous ceux qui ces presentes verront salut.

Scavoir faisons, qu'ayant consideré le miserable estat ou se trouvent a present les Dames Religieuses Anglaises de l'Ordre de S. Benoit a nous immediatement sujettes en cette ville de Gand, et veu la somme excessive des debtes qu'elles ont deu contracter, faute du payment des rentes et arrierages leur deus en Angleterre durant les dernières séditions et revoltes funestes de ce Royaume; outre le malheur qui leurs est arrive, de se voir frustrées depuis le restablissement de sa Majesté Britannique de notable pretensions

* Arrears.

† Which.

et promesses fort avantageuses, que quelques Seigneurs de leur nation leurs ont faictes, pendant qu'ils etaient exilés dans ce pays, lesquels elles ont assisté, de leur propres, avec une charité si grande, qu'elles se sont elles mêmes mises dans la necessité pour les secourir.

Ces tristes accidens ont si vivement touché notre cœur de compassion que la tendresse Paternelle, que nous avons en leur endroit, nous oblige a les favoriser de toute sorte d'assistance et supports possible. Et a cet effet nous leurs avons octroyé ces presentes Lettres, pour faire voir que c'est la chose du monde la plus pitoyable et tres digne de compassion que ces Dames, etant plus de soixante en nombre, d'une extraction noble et education exquise, apres avoir vescu exemplairement en ce lieu dans une union tres etroite et un Exercise continuel de toute sorte de vertus (de quoy pouvons donner ample et suffisant tesmoignage) sont maintenant reduittes tant a raison du premis que pour les miseres du temps et la perte en leur patrie de plus de 150,000 fl., a des telles extremitez et disettes qui ni le travail de leur main, n'y la mendicité de porte en porte (si leur condition leur permettoit) ne suffiroit tant seulement a la discharge de leur dictes debtes.

C'est pour quoy nous supplions la Divine Bonté, qu'elle veuille puissamment exciter les fideles Catholiques, auxquels ces lettres seront presentées, afin qu'esmeus par les dernieres miseres que souffrent ces Dames Religieuses, dignes tout à fait de pitie, il leur plaise les assister par leur charité et secours liberaux, auxquels nous les exhortons par les entrailles de celuy qui porte le nom d'un Dieu d'Infinie Misericorde.

En foy de quoy nous avons fait expedier les presentes soubz nos signature & Seal accoustumé.

Donné a Gand dans nostre Palais Episcopal le 29 d'Octobre, 1669.

+ Eugene Albert, Evesque de Gand.

No. 14.

*Letter of the Bishop of Ghent to the Lady Abbess, Justina Petre,
at a time of great poverty.*

(The original of this letter, which is in Latin and kept in the Episcopal Archives at Ghent, is in so bad a state of preservation that portions of it are quite illegible: the following transcription has been put together as well as could be managed, but should rather be called an abstract than a complete translation).

[Date—October the 1st, 1696.]

Philip by the grace of God and favour of the Apostolic See Bishop of Ghent, to our beloved daughter in Christ, the venerable Lady Justina Petre, Abbess of the Monastery of our Blessed Lady of the Order of St. Benedict in this city, subject to us by ordinary jurisdiction, health in the Lord. Whereas it has been made known to us by those who are worthy of credence that your monastery, owing to the difficulties of the times and the disturbed state of England and Ireland, has been reduced to such want and poverty that even the smallest means possible for the maintenance of its religious are wanting, and there appears to be an urgent necessity for having recourse in person

to your relations and friends in quest of the same, to implore their help in your present necessity. Hence, being sufficiently satisfied as to your piety, zeal and industry, and having weighed maturely this urgent case, by the tenor of these presents, and in God's Name, we grant and impart to you this permission, and that each take with her one religious, of whose modesty, piety and suitableness for so important a business you are assured, and one converse sister to attend them; also to leave the inclosure of the monastery and remain out of it for six weeks, to be calculated from the day of departure, that thus you may freely assist your monastery and religious. We pray our good God to lead forth and bring back in safety both you and your companions.

And, moreover, we commend you in the name of the Lord to all with whom you may chance to lodge.

Given at Ghent in our Episcopal Palace in the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and ninety-six, on the first day of October, under our seal and signature . . .

[The remainder is illegible.]

No. 15.

Contract with Livine Baesbanck.

(Copied accurately from the original document which is in our Archives, bearing signatures in the various handwritings of the nuns).

Actum the 31st of december 1700
in the Monastery of the English
Dames Benedictines on St. Peters
near Gant.

Upon y^e same day after the Bell was rung with all the solemnity thereto required according to the Canonique Laws, were capitulariter assembled at the ordinary place the Reverend Lady Magdalene Lucy Abbess of the sayd Monastery, Dame Francis Simons Prioress, Dame Victoria Munson Procuratrix, ~~Dame Francisca Carington~~, Dame Paula Hall, Dame Valeria Stanley, and Dame Teresia Manack, Religious Ancients & Councill, as also Dame Mary Joseph, Dame Agnes, Dame Mary Fermor, Dame Apolonia Porter, Dame Maura Fitzwilliams, Dame Anne Wesby, Dame Mary Knatchbull, Dame Scholastica Gerard and Dame Constantia Howard, also Religious of the same Monastery being all those that have voyces in the Chapter for the present.

Att which Chapterly assembly the aforesayd Lady Abbess has produced a certain contract dated the 30th of this month of december contracted by her in Dutch whereof the Translation in English is as follows.

Whereas Livinus Baesbanck a Mason by Trade has presented himself to the Reverend Lady Abbess of the English Dames Benedictines on St. Peters near Gant to be as a perpetuall domesticq taken in the sayd Monastery, so are the sayd Lady Abbess for herself and her successors in the same dignity, and in the name of all her Community of one side, and the aforesaid Baesbanck on the other side agreed in the matter as

followeth—To witt that the sayd Baesbanck promises and binds himself during his life as long as his health and ability shall permitt, to serve the sayd Monastery in all manner possible not only in Mason worke but also in Carpenting, Tyling, and slating worke as farr as his knowledge and ability reacheth as also in all other workes to which the sayd Baesbanck shall be judged fitt, and shall be put to, as well within as without the Monastery, except only the goeing with the wheelbarrow, and the fetching or carrying of graines as well within as without the Monastery. In consideration whereof the sayd Lady Abbesse has accepted, and does accept by these presents the sayd Bayesbanck for a perpetuall domestick, has promist, and obliged herself as she does promis and oblige by these present in the name of all her Community to maintain the sayd Baestanck in clothes linnen and woollen, of Hatt Stockings, shoes &c. decently according to his condition and according or in like manner the sayd Baesbanck well provided of clothes and Linnen has presented himself to the Monastery, as also trimming, meat and drink as well in sicknesse as in good health during his life althô he by ould age or otherwise came to be impotent or unfitt to do any worke, as also in case of sicknesse, wound or any other accident to provide the sayd Bayesbanck without any charge of his, of Doctor, Surgeon, and Medicaments, infine all what to the recovery of his health shall be necessary, and above all this to give and pay him every week one shilling Flemish in money during his life over and above the vayles or profit which the sayd Baesbanck otherwise may gett, with which profitts and weekly money it shall be allowed him to doe what he pleases, and to dispose of it as his owne without being bound to bestow anything thereof in Clothes, Linnen, or maintenance, all which as is sayd before must come from the Monastery.

Finally the sayd Lady Abbesse promisses in the name of her Community as aforesayd to get the Corps of the sayd Baesbanck decently buried according to his condition, and at the discretion of she that shall be Abbesse at that time, and to cause to be sayd within two Months at farthest after his deceace for his soul thirty Masses of Requiem at the charge of the Monastery. The sayd Lady Abbesse declared also to be content that after the deceace of Baesbanck aforesayd shall be given and delivered to his relations or next heir ab Intestato by forme of a liberall guift from the sayd Monastery, half of all the clothes linnen and wollen that belonged and served to his body, as also all the ready money that the sayd Baesbanck shall leave behind him. Being all the premise by both parties Contractants accepted with reciproke promise precisely to perform the same in every point according to Law. And that this contract may the better subsist, the sayd Lady Abbesse promises also that after the Translation thereof into English to get the same approved Capitulariter by her Community and to deliver to the sayd Baesbanck the act thereof in forma.

Actum in Gant in the sayd Monastery in the presence of Mr. Francis Green Priest and Confessor of the sayd Monastery and Mr. Guilliame de Dorpere Advocate in the Council of Flanders as wittnesses hereto called and desired, who have explicated the contents of this contract, and have read the same to the sayd Lady Abbesse as also the Translation thereof in English before it was signed, and made hereof two copies both signed by both the Contractants, and by the sayd Wittnesses the 30th of December 1700, and was signed M. Magdalen Lucy Abbess, Livin Baesbanck, francis green, and g. de Dorpere.

And is after mature deliberation thought fitt, being the sayd Contract very beneficiall to our Monastery, seeing that in all occasions there will be at hand a fitt workman whereby many dear day workes may be spared, and for many more reasons and conveniences to accept, approve and ratifie the same for as much as need is accepted approved and ratified by these presents as better done than left. In signe of verity wee have heretofore made two equall Capitular acts, whereof one of them is kept in our Archives, and the other shall be delivered to the said Baesbanck aforesayd, which will serve him for reciproke obligation between him and our Monastery being both signed in y^e yeare, month, and day as above written.

M. Magdalen Lucy Abbess
 Dame ffrances Simons Prioress
 D^{ma} Victoria Monson procuratrix Dame Paula Hall
 D^{ma} Valeria Stanley and Dame Mannock
 D^{ma} Mary Joseph Lawson Dame Agnes Wakeman
 D^{ma} Mary Fermor D^{ma} Apolonia Porter
 Dame Maura ffitzwilliams Dame Anna Westby
 Dame Mary Knatchbull Dame Schollastica Gerard
 Dame Constantia Howard

No. 16.

List of the Convent, drawn up for a Canonical Visitation in the month of February, 1725.

Our Right Reverend Lady Abbess.

Dm Magdalen Lucy, Prioress in ye 38th year of her age & 20th of her profession.

Dm Constantia Howard 1st Dean & Consultress in ye 55th of her age & 38th of her profession.

Dm Cecilia Tildesley 2nd Dean Consultress & Mrs. of Novices in ye 38th of her age & 18th of her profession.

Dm Winefrid Lucy 3rd Dean Consultress & Cellier in ye 35th of her age & 17th of her profession.

Dm Augustin Blundel 4th Dean Consultress & Infirmarian in ye 38th of her age & 17th of her profession.

Dm Maura ffitzwilliam Jubilarian in the 82 of her age & 56 of her profession.

Dm Ana Westby in the 70th year of her age and 45 of her profession.

Dm Placida Tempest Procratrix in ye 37th of her age & 16th of her profession.

Dm Scholastica Stanley, Thourier, in ye 33th of her age & 16th of her profession.

Dm flavia Tempest Chantress & 2nd Mrs. of Novices, in the 33th of her age & 15th of her profession.

Dm Helen White, Portress in the 31 of her age and 14 of her profession.

Dm Agnatia Clifford Sacrestin & Chaplain in ye 30th of her age & 13 of her profession.

Dm Justina Blount guardrub, in the 33th of her age & 13th of her profession.

Dm Benedict Wilson Mrs. of ye Stil-house & 2nd Chaplain in ye 33th of her age & 12th of profession.

Dm Ruperta Browne in ye 27th year of her age & 9th of her profession.

Dm Mary Ann Gerard in ye 26th year of her age & 8th of her profession.

Dm Frances ffermor in the 26th year of her age & 7th of her profession.

Dm Bernard Caryll in the 26th year of her age and 7th of her profession.

Dm Joseph Maire in the 26th year of her age & 7th of her profession.

Dm Gertrude Hastings in ye 22 year of her age & 2d of her profession.

Dm Xaveria Senern in ye 32 year of her age & 2d of her profession.

Dm Ildefons Clifford in ye 18th year of her age & 1st of her profession.

No. 17.

*“Procès Verbal” of the Election of the Lady Cecilia Tyldesley 9th Abbess
of Ghent, 1730.*

(From the original document, preserved in the Episcopal Archives at Ghent).

Attestamus in monasterio nobilissimarum monialium Anglarum ordinis Sti. Benedicti, in hac civitate Gandavensi, coram Reverendis admodum Dominis Gulielmo de Potter et Petro le Bolenger (Euenjote) cathedralis Ecclesiæ Sti. Bavonis canonicis a Capitulo dictæ Ecclesiæ (sede vacante) ad infrascripta specialiter deputatis, assistente Reverendo admodum Domino Patritio Everard canonico Ecclesiæ S^{te} Pharaïldis presentibus Rev^{do} Dño Jacobo Whetenhall monasterii confessorio et Rev^{do} Patre Philippo Wright Societatis Jesu hac 12 Julii 1730.

Eadem die post celebratam Missam de Spiritu Sancto per primo supranominatum deputatum, et habito ad religiosas sermone circa electionem novæ Abbatisæ in locum nuper defunctæ reverendæ Dominæ Mariæ Knatchbull, processum fuit juxta formam Sancti Concilii Tridentini et constitutiones hujus Monasterii eidem conformes, ad supradictam electionem in qua in primo scrutinio Domina Maria Magdalena (Lucy) habuit quatuor suffragia, Dña Winefrida (Lucy) septem, Dña Cecilia Tyldesley undecim, et c. mus per hoc scrutinium juxta constitutiones non esset electio, processum fuit ad secundum scrutinium, in qua Dña Maria Magdalena Lucy habuit duo suffragia, Dña Winefrida (Lucy) sex, et Dña Cecilia Tyldesley quatuordecim, adeoque tum adhuc non esset electio, processum est ad tertium scrutinium, juxta easdem constitutiones hujus monasterii ballottando, ac jamprimis pro Dña Maria Magdalena Lucy, quæ habuit tantum duo suffragia; deinde ballottatum fuit pro Dña Winefrida Lucy quæ habuit septem suffragia. Denique ballottatum fuit pro Dña Cecilia Tyldesley quæ habuit quindecim suffragia, adeoque dicta Dña Cecilia Tyldesley canonicè electa fuit Abbatisa hujus monasterii; quam electionem nos supradicti deputati canonicam esse declaramus et confirmamus, mandantes Dominis monialibus eidem uti legitime suæ Abbatisæ obedire, ut supra actum.

G. DE POTTER, Pbr.

P. LE BOLENGER, Pbr.

[*Translation of the foregoing.*]

We bear witness to the following: In the monastery of the noble English nuns of the Order of St. Benedict in this city of Ghent; in the presence of the Very Reverend Messrs. William de Potter and Peter le Bolenger, canons of the Cathedral Church of St. Bavo, specially deputed for the purpose by the Chapter of the said Church (the See being vacant), assisted by the Very Rev. Patrick Everard, canon of the church of St. Pharaïlde, in the presence also of the Rev. James Whetenhall, confessor of the Monastery, and the Rev. Father Philip Wright of the Society of Jesus, on this 12th day of July 1730.

On this same day, after the celebration of a mass "de Spiritu Sancto" by the first named of these deputies, and a sermon having been preached to the nuns about the election of a new abbess, in the place of the Rev. Lady Mary Knatchbull lately deceased, all proceeded to the said election according to the form laid down by the holy Council of Trent and the constitutions of this monastery in accordance therewith. In the first scrutiny Dame Mary Magdalen (Lucy) had four votes, Dame Winefride (Lucy) seven, Dame Cecilia Tyldesley eleven; and since in this scrutiny, by the constitutions there was no election, they proceeded to the second scrutiny, in which Dame Mary Magdalen Lucy had two votes, D^m. Winefride Lucy, six, and D^m. Cecilia Tyldesley fourteen, and since even then there was no election, they proceeded to the third scrutiny, according to the same constitutions of this monastery, by ballot; and firstly for D^m. Mary Magdalen Lucy, who had only two suffrages; then they balloted for D^m. Winefride Lucy, who had seven; lastly did they ballot for D^m. Cecilia Tyldesley who had fifteen votes, therefore the said D^m. Cecilia Tyldesley was canonically elected Abbess of this monastery, which election we, the above-named deputies, declared to be canonical, and confirmed accordingly, commanding the religious Dames to obey her as their lawful Abbess, all having been done as above said.

W. DE POTTER, Priest.

P. LE BOLENGER, Priest.

No. 18.

Poetry written by the Rev. Thomas Phillips, S.J., on occasion of the profession of his sister, Dame Mary Baptist, at Ghent.

To the Right Reverend and Religious Dame Elizabeth Phillips, on her entering the Religious Order of St. Benet in the Convent of English Dames of the same Order at Gant.

When graceful Judith, conscious of her charms,
The hostile army sought and braved their arms,
Nor feared alone the danger to forego,
And fac'd the terrors of th' Assyrian foe;
The Hebrew chiefs, with anxious cares oppress'd,
While hope and fear by turns possess their breast,
The wish'd event with wavering minds attend,

And, doubtful of her fate, their joy suspend :
But when returned, and glorying in her might,
At once she gladdened and surprised their sight,
When free from harm, with hostile spoils arrayed,
Victorious and untouch'd they viewed the maid ;
In gathering throngs the joyful squadrons wait,
And hail the saviour of the Hebrew State ;
From rank to rank the spreading triumph flies,
And shouting millions shake the vaulted skies :
So, Sister, when by Heaven inspiring led,
From the false world in early youth you fled,
And bravely dared in Virtue's noble chase
(Tho' hard the terms and difficult the race)
The list to enter and the laws embrace ;
My Muse consenting with the Heavenly Quire,
Approved your choice and fanned the sacred fire.
Tho' awed by pious fear, her cautious lays
Rather informed your mind than sung your praise,
But since resolv'd and steady to your trust,
Inflexible to change and obstinately just,
Above the world with generous warmth you rise,
Contemn its greatness and its joys despise,
And spring exulting to the destined prize.
Joyful the triumph of her voice she brings,
Displays your glories and your praises sings ;
While the glad notes o'er Sœldis' waves rebound,
And distant hills the pleasing theme resound.
Such constancy your tender years exprest,
When early virtue warmed your infant breast ;
Formed to religion in your native air,
You soon surpass'd your parent's timely care ;
Thence far from hope, to foreign realms conveyed,
Your rising virtue brighter beams displayed ;
There five years spent amidst a virgin train,
Your ardour cherished and improved your flame :
And when constrained to leave your loved retreat,
You crossed the main to seek your native seat,
Nor worldly charms nor parents' stronger love
The steady purpose of your soul could move ;
But bearing forward with undaunted force,
And urging as the goal approach'd your course,
Fixed and resolved the noble race you run,
And greatly finish what you well begun.
Thus when the sun arising from the sea,

With early glories paints the dawning day,
Pale and remote at first he darts his rays,
And only promises a perfect blaze ;
But as he mounts increasing splendours rise,
And meaner lightnings quicken in the skies ;
Till by degrees the opening air refines,
And the bright orb in full perfection shines.
Oh, if your life's succeeding years display
A constant clear and universal ray ;
If, as in age, in virtue's love you grow,
As down their channels streams increasing flow,
If Reason's light and Grace's purer fire
Your mind irradiate and your breast inspire ;
If gaily serious, innocently sweet,
Meek without weakness, without pride discreet,
Betwixt extremes a steady course you tend,
Just to mankind and to yourself a friend,
While, Scheld, thy waves through Ganda's meadows flow
And fruitful verdure as they pass bestow ;
Those fields, as long as British Virgins grace,
For virtue noble, as their gen'rous race,
And far the common of their sex outshine,
As vulgar torrents are surpassed by thine ;
While wit, good-nature, youth and goodness please,
And blameless manners joined with graceful ease.
While such as give or merit honour praise survive,
Your honours, *Sister*, and your name shall live.
Ye sister Virgins ! In whose spotless train
Her infant breast received the heavenly flame,
Whose wisdom sway'd her and whose virtue fired,
Whose mildness charm'd her and whose zeal inspired ;
Oh, let a Brother's ever grateful lays
Those bright examples which she followed praise ;
Bright as those stars which in the milky way
United force and social beams display :
Frequent and full the silver host of night
Supply the sun and Heav'n's expansion light ;
Each in its sphere distinguished lustre shows,
And all emblazed the spangled æther glows.
But TYLDSLEY'S* virtues far above the rest
To all conspicuous, and by all confest,

* Lady Cecilia Tyldesley was Abbess at the time of Dame Baptist's profession, and Dame Magdalen Lucy Prioress.

Challenge superior praise, and make her be
The first in merit and in dignity :
Whose state, her merits : worth, her noble race ;
Her sex, her prudence ; virtues age surpass.
She, like the Moon, fair Empress of the Night,
Above the lesser orbs divinely bright,
Exerts her beams, and o'er the sky displays
Distinguished lustre and unrivalled rays ;
While round the sov'reign of the starry pole,
The shining glories of the heavens roll.
Next LUCY'S splendours that fair æther grace,
The next in merit as the next in place ;
In whom each virtue, each perfection join,
And charms of body with the soul's combine ;
Where mildest manners warm the noblest breast
With native greatness and good nature blest,
Of all that Heav'n can give, or wish desire possess.
Hard were the task and difficult the theme
To give each virgin of the sister train
That proper praise that each one's merits claim :
Whilst meekness this : religion that attends ;
Devotion this : obedience that commends ;
This, early prudence in a youthful bloom ;
That, the rich labours of th' industrious loom ;
Here social virtues : there celestial fœ ;
And some prerogative to all is due.
So in *Hesperian* gardens fam'd of old,
For fertile silver and productive gold ;
The eye, bewildered in the glorious sight,
Surveys the whole with wonder and delight ;
But doubts, in pleasing admiration lost,
What to prefer or what to value most ;
When equal charms with rival beauty vie,
And only differ in variety.
Such, Sister, are the blessings of your fate,
And such the partners of your happy state ;
Oh may you ever, in their train, possess
A constant calm and perfect happiness ;
And here below anticipated prove
The joys which wait you in the realms above,
Till with each merit stor'd, each virtue blest
Of ev'ry grace and ev'ry good possess,
Your blameless soul shall take its easy flight,
And leave the earth to seek the realms of light.

There, rob'd in white, amidst the chosen ring,
 Where spotless virgins Hymeneals sing ;
 Whose tuneful breath, and more than mortal lays
 Shall ev'n in heavenly ears attention raise,
 Your honour'd voice those wondrous notes shall reach
 Which only Virgins learn and Angels teach.
 Thence, when you cast, by heav'nly pity moved,
 A mindful look on those whom once you lov'd ;
 If yet, among the sons of upper air,
 The heavy load of mortal life I bear,
 Let me in you my guardian spirit prove
 An Angel's conduct and a Sister's love ;
 Do you my ways direct, my steps attend,
 At once my guide, companion and my friend.
 Oh teach me, teach me, heav'nly joys to prize,
 Myself to conquer and the world despise :
 Prompt to my view each blissful scene display,
 And charm my sight with gleams of endless day ;
 Thus, when this frame shall shake with ready death
 And my lips tremble with their latest breath,
 My parting soul in seas of pleasure drown'd,
 By saints surrounded and by Angels crowned,
 From earth, on wings of seraphs borne, shall fly,
 And mount triumphant on its native sky ;
 There thron'd in glory shall we ever shine,
 And friendly spirits place my seat by thine.

By THOMAS PHILLIPS.

N.B.—The above lines were published in the "European Magazine. 1796. London." September, Vol. 30, pp. 172-174.

No. 19.

Letter of Lady Mary Baptist Phillips, Abbess, to the Bishop of Ghent M. Goward Gerard van Ersel. From the Original, kept in the Episcopal Archives.

Monseigneur,

Pardonnez la liberté que je prens de m'adresser a Votre Grandeur sur un
 affaire que je ne souhaite point de décider sans l'approbation de Mgr. La chose en
 question est pour savoir la volonté de votre Grandeur par raport de les feate qui sont
 abrogé par sa Sainteté, si Monseigneur le jugera convenable que nous continuerons
 d'avoir une seconde Messe et le salue comme nous somme accoutume d'avoir, je ne
 trouve que trois ou quarte pour les plus de la Communauté qui sont contre la continuation
 de cette dévotion ; par conséquence je souhaite de suivre l'exemple de ma chère et tres

honorable Predecesseur dans le dernier occasion de ne rien faire sans l'approbation de votre Grandeur. L'honneur de votre reponse en ecriture serra une grande obligation pour elle qui est avec le plus profond respect et veneration.

Monseigneur,
votre tres humble et tres obeissant
servant et fille en Jesus Christ
BAPTIST PHILLIPS Abbess Indigne.

Aux Dames Bened. Anglaises.

Repondu le 5 de Fevrier 1773 qu'il convient de dire une seconde Messe et un salue a l'ordinaire.

Signé
G. G. EV. DE GAND.

No. 20.

Contract between Rev. J. Whetenhall and the Community of Ghent, in 1768.

(The original of this deed is in our possession, and is written in French, with the signatures in the respective handwritings of the witnesses. The following copy is from a translation, also amongst our Archives, which is apparently of about the same date as the French original).

The underwritten James Whetenhall, Priest, Living at St Peter^a at Gant, declares by this to give up & abandon to the Community & Convent of the English Benedictine Dames all the Goods he actually possesses, which consists only in the moveables of his Chamber, some little Plate, some Pictures, a Library of Books, Linnen & other necessities, all attained by the Liberality of the Lady Abbess & English Benedictines above mentioned, & shall not be touched by any of his Relations. They charge themselves to take care of the underwritten the Remaining days it shall please Almighty God to leave him in this world, to provide him with all human necessities, none excepted nor reserved, as well in Health as Sickness, which grant Dame Mary Baptist Phillips, Abbess of this said Convent, & the Subsigned Religious in the name of the Community declares to accept, & the Respective Parties have Signed this at Gant this 31st of May, 1768.

JAMES WHETENHALL.
MARY BAPTIST PHILLIPS, Abbess.
MARY ANSELM TEMPEST, Prioress.
ROMANA ALEXANDER.
CLEMENTINA ARDEN.
MARY MAGDALEN ARDEN.
MARY FRANCES HESKETH, Procuratrix.

Present The Subsigned

J. Porter=P. C. de Crane

M. Lyon. 1768.

The above Act register'd in the Register of the Griffier of the Jurisdiction of St Peters at Gant, folio 66, by the Subsigned Griffier the 1st of June, 1768.

G. VANDEYUS.

Register'd in the Register of the Griffier of Eschevius of the Councel of the Town of Gant, folio 80, ye 1st of June, 1768. Witness as Secretary of the Said Town of Gant.

ALBERT GOFMAN.

No. 21.

Agreement made by the Lady Abbess, when leaving Ghent, with Mons. J. F. Fryson.

(From a document in our Archives which is apparently a copy—Fryson himself probably kept the original. The deed was drawn up neither by the nuns nor by Fryson, but by a third party, whom Fryson described to Mr. Barrow as an “honnête homme” known to the community. The identity of this man has been lost, but if our copy of the deed is accurate, he was evidently not an educated person. The following is transcribed from it exactly, with the faults in spelling, &c., unaltered. The deed itself appears to be highly unsatisfactory, being signed by Fryson alone. Nor is it clear whether the price of the premises at Ghent was really fixed at 1,200 or 1,400 Louis, since Fryson afterwards assured Mr. Barrow that the statement that 200 had been already paid was untrue, and merely inserted as a blind to the French civil authorities, in the hope that they would not claim any of the property if the value was already paid in part).

Aujourd'hui 30 Juin 1794 nous Marie Magdalen Arden Abbessse, Marie Anselm Tempest, Marie Benedict Bedingfeld dame de l'abei des dames Anglaises de gand et y demeurant ordinairement et des present en la Ville d'anvers et J. ffryson demeurant aussi en La Ville de gand et de present en celle d'anvers sommes convenues ce qui Suit.

Savoir est que moi dittes abbessse confonde et me faisant fort de tout ce qui peut regardé tant la dite communauté que le gouvernement quand a ce qui nous regarde et dont nous prommettoses leur garanti envers le dit J. ffryson declarons lui avoir ce jourd'hui vendues, cedé quitté délaisser et transporté par sa presente tous nos biens immeubles situé en la ditte Ville de gand tout ainsi et de la meme maniere que nous en avons jousi jusqu'a ce jour sans aucune exception ni Reserve promettant faire Ratifier la presente par le gouvernement la presente vente faite pour et moiennant le prix et sommes de mil quatre cents Louis argent de France que moi dit sieur acquéreur promet m'oblige paier en douze ans a Raison de cents Louis par an et aiant présentement païé celle de deux cents Louis en especes au moien de tout quoi nous dames abbesses nous sommes demises, devetu, de saisé, de la propriété des dits lieux vendues en avons vetu et Saisis le dissieur et acquereur pour en jouir par lui les siens et aiant causé comme de son Vrai Bien Domaine ancienne Eritage et Loyal a Guist pour l'entretiennement de tout quoi ou les partie soussignées chacune a leur regard affecté et jpotique tous leurs Biens tant presents que futur fait a Anvers les jour, mois que dessus sous nos Saints Respectives dont chacun artiré le Sien.

J. F. FRYSON.

Nous Marie Magdalaine Arden Abbessse du convent et communauté des dames Anglaises de l'abei de gand conjointement avec Marie Anselm Tempest et autres

soussignes et moi J. f. fryson demeurant a grand sommes convenues dece qui suit. *Savoir* est que nous dittes dames avons aujourd'hui vendues au dissieur acquereur sans aucune exception quelconques et sans aucune reserve tous nos meubles meublant et generalement tous les de faits à nous appartenant et qui peuvent être demouté en notre ditte Communauté de grand la presente Vente fait au gré des parties pour moiennant le prix et sommes de trois cents livres de gros argent courant de Brabant que J'ai a l'instant païé comptant et dont quittance de la part de nous dittes dames Venderesse fait double sous nos Saints Respectifs dont chacun artiré le Sien a Anvers le 30 Juin, 1794.

J. F. FRYSON.

No. 22.

Names of some of the principal Benefactors of our Monastery at Ghent, Preston and Caverswall.

Rev. Father John Norton *alias* Knatchbull, S.J., brother to the Lady Lucy Knatchbull, first Abbess of Ghent, contributed greatly to the establishment of this monastery. He obtained from Madame the Infanta of Spain in 1631 (at the time of her marriage with the Archduke Albert, son of the Emperor) the sum of 15,000 pounds sterling,* but the troubles which arose at that time in Germany prevented all being paid.†

Monsieur Antoine de Trieste, Bishop of Ghent, assisted our monastery considerably, sending supplies of wood, corn, &c., in times of poverty, and in various other ways. (+ 1657).

His Majesty the King of England (Charles II.) gave in pensions, legacies and alms the sum of 5,000 pounds sterling (?) He also settled on our monastery an annuity of £500, and in honour of his restoration to the throne in 1660 he presented 400 English pieces (?)

His Majesty King James II., when Duke of York, was a great friend to our monastery, and after his accession to the English throne continued for a time to give the annuity promised by his brother, but after his dethronement this was necessarily discontinued.

The Duke of Buckingham gave 1,200 florins (about £100).

My Lord Abingdon and M. l'Abbé Montagu gave the same sum.

The Earl of Bristol (Digby) gave 600 florins (about £50).

The Sieurs Castel Rodrigo and the Count de Monteverry gave each 300 florins (about £25).

Rev. Father William Vincent gave to our monastery 6,000 florins (about £500). (+ 1660).

M. Louis van Hobrouck advanced the sum of 35,000 florins (about £2,917) for the building of the new monastery.

* If *livres* is meant, this sum would probably amount to about £625 of English money.

† These particulars, as well as a few of those which follow are obtained from a MS. at East Bergholt, the present representatives of the Brussels community.

M. Charles van den Bosch, Bishop of Ghent, contributed to the building of the new monastery. (+ 1665).

Anne (Hyde), Duchess of York, was a benefactress of our monastery, but the account of her benefactions has been lost. (+ 1672).

Sir Thomas Preston, father of the Duchess of Powis, and Lady Clifford, gave £4,500.

Sir Charles Sedley gave an annuity of either £400 or £200 to our monastery during the forty-four years that his wife resided there.

Mrs. Mary Anne Howard (+ 1718) and Grace Lady Smythe (+ 1720) were great benefactors of our monastery.

Rev. James Whetenhall (+ 1773) left his library and other effects to our monastery.

The family of the Tempests, of Broughton, made gifts to our monastery from time to time during the course of the 18th Century.

Mr. James Hesketh-Brockholes, of Claughton, left £60 per annum from the time of his death to the dissolution of our monastery, and from that time £100 per annum during the life time of his sister Dame Frances Hesketh (He died in 1783).

Mrs Frances Henrietta Maire was a great benefactress to our monastery, but a full account of her benefactions has not been preserved (+ 1794).

Mr. William Fitzherbert Brockholes gave £100 to the community when settling at Preston, £8 per annum during the life time of Dame Benedicta Bedingfeld, and £25 towards the building of the chapel at Caverswall Castle. (+ 1817).

Mr. and Mrs. Roskell, of Garstang, gave a supply of bedding, &c., for the temporary monastery at Preston, and were in other ways generous benefactors. (+ 1801 and 1803).

The Right Rev. Bishop Milner gave £45 towards the building of the chapel at Caverswall, and was a very great benefactor and friend to the community in every way. (+ 1826).

Mrs. Firth contributed £160 to the chapel at Caverswall.

Miss Gerard gave £50 to the same object.

Lord Newburgh, Mr. Thomas Clifford, and Mrs. Weld gave each £20 towards the same.

The Right Rev. Bishop Walsh gave £30 towards a new organ for the chapel at Caverswall (+ 1849).

Mr. William Hoy, of Stoke-by-Nayland, gave also £30 towards the same object.

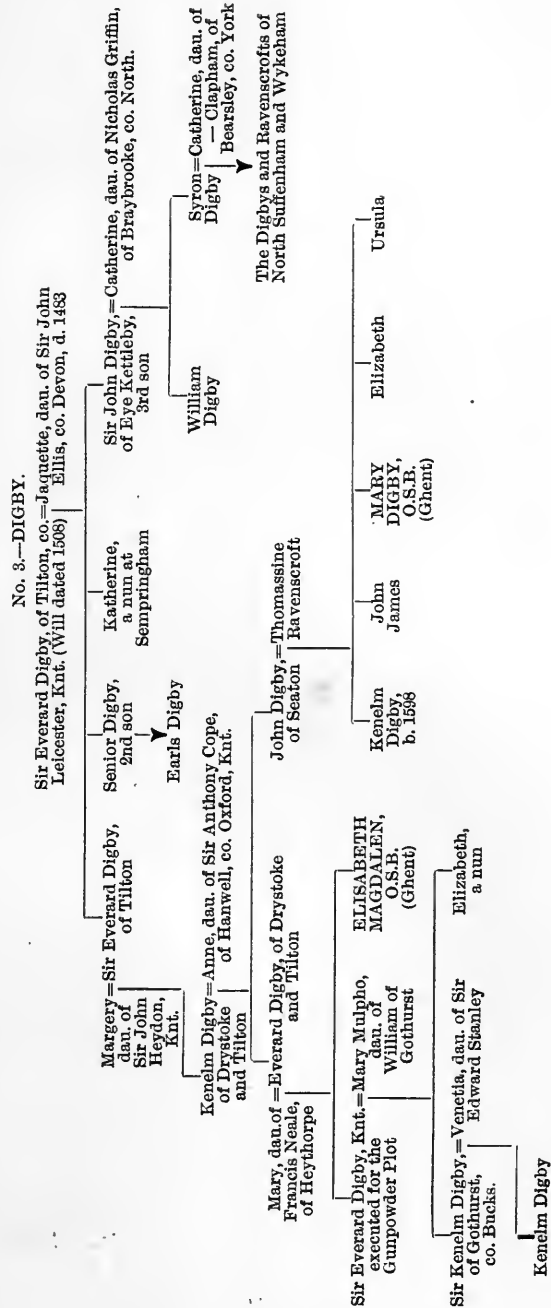
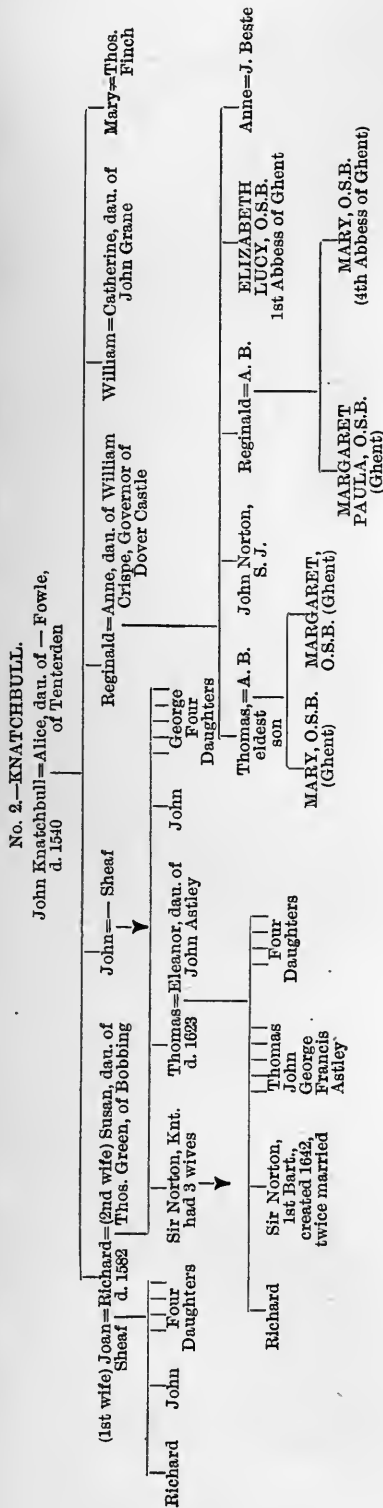
John, 16th Earl of Shrewsbury, presented several valuable paintings and other gifts to the community.

No. 23.

Lines on Caverswall Castle, written by the Rev. Francis Martyn, missionary priest at Walsall, and for some time Extraordinary Confessor to the community at Caverswall. He died on the 18th of July, 1838.

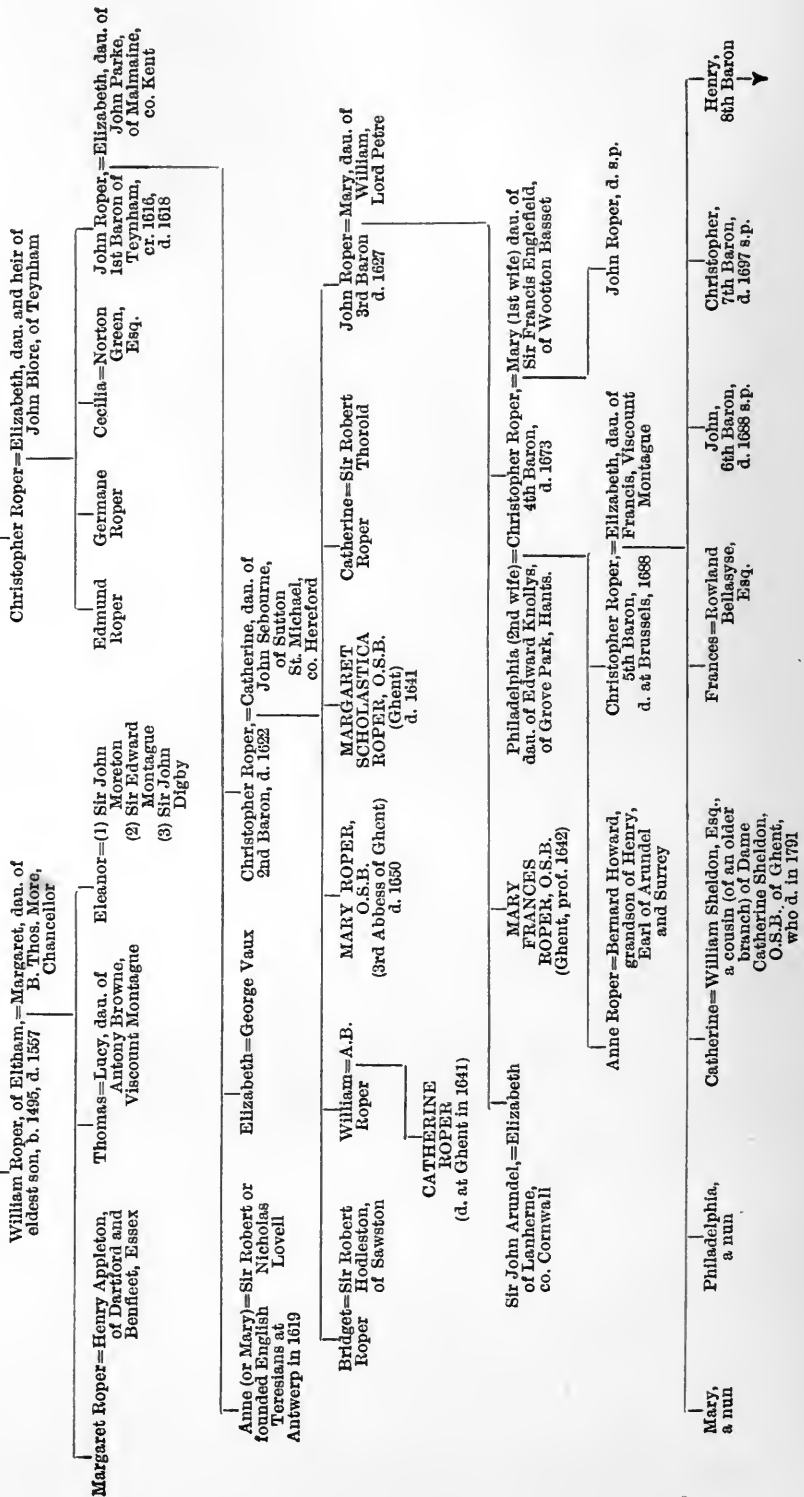
Where yonder castle veils its aged head
 Amid the lime trees' thick embowering shade
 Long let us stray: it's piety's abode,
 Where all combines to raise the soul to God.

Hail, happy Caverswall! What favouring powers
Recalled to light thy long-forgotten towers?
Long had thy castle drooped its hoary head,
Mourning its ancient state for ever fled;
Long had thy beauties in oblivion lain,
And travellers pass'd, unheeding, o'er the plain.
Scared by the gloom that hung around the scene,
Mirth's festive train had left thy village green.
But now, as if thy sweet enchanting vale
Had stamp'd existence on some fairy tale,
Far as the sight extends around the seat
Th' enraptured eye unnumbered beauties meet;
Rock, hill and dale the varied prospect cheers,
And nature's charms in loveliest form appears;
While, as exulting o'er this wide domain,
Thy castle stands, the sov'reign of the plain;
Within its walls are heard those sounds alone
That waft rich perfumes to th' eternal throne.
Long ere the rising sun with welcome ray
Proclaims to man the glad return of day,
The happy inmates of this blest abode
Renew their silent converse with their God:
Then, their breast glowing with devotion's fire,
Resound his praises thro' the saintly choir;
Prostrate, with reverential awe around,
The Lamb mysterious they adore profound:
See his atoning death renewed again;
See him still bleeding for the sins of men;
And as before their Victim God they bend,
Victims of love, their hearts to heaven ascend:
Nor ends devotion with the hour of prayer;
Whate'er the livelong day demands their care
Is done for heaven; with pure intent they give
Each act to God; to God alone they live.
Oft here, triumphant o'er religion's foes,
Truth's dreaded champion, *Milner*, seeks repose;
Here at devotion's shrine his laurels lays,
And gives to God the homage of his praise,
With heartfelt gratitude, to Heaven alone
Confessing due the trophies he has won.
Guard him, ye angels! 'Tis a people's prayer!
May heaven preserve him with peculiar care
Long in religion's cause the sword to wield,
And hold o'er truth his adamant shield.



No. 4.—ROPER OF ELTHAM, LORDS TEYNHAM.

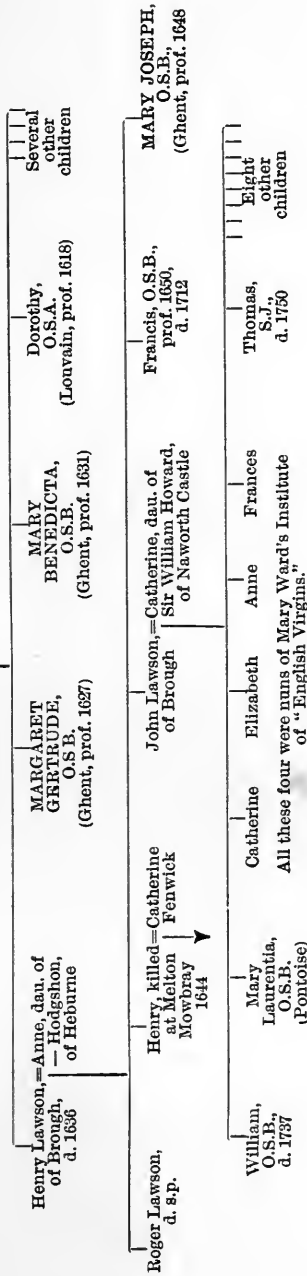
John Roper, of Eltham



No. 5.—LAWSON.

Sir Ralph Lawson, of Brough = Elizabeth, dau. of Roger Burgh
of Burgh Hall, which he
acquired by his wife, Knt.,
d. 1623

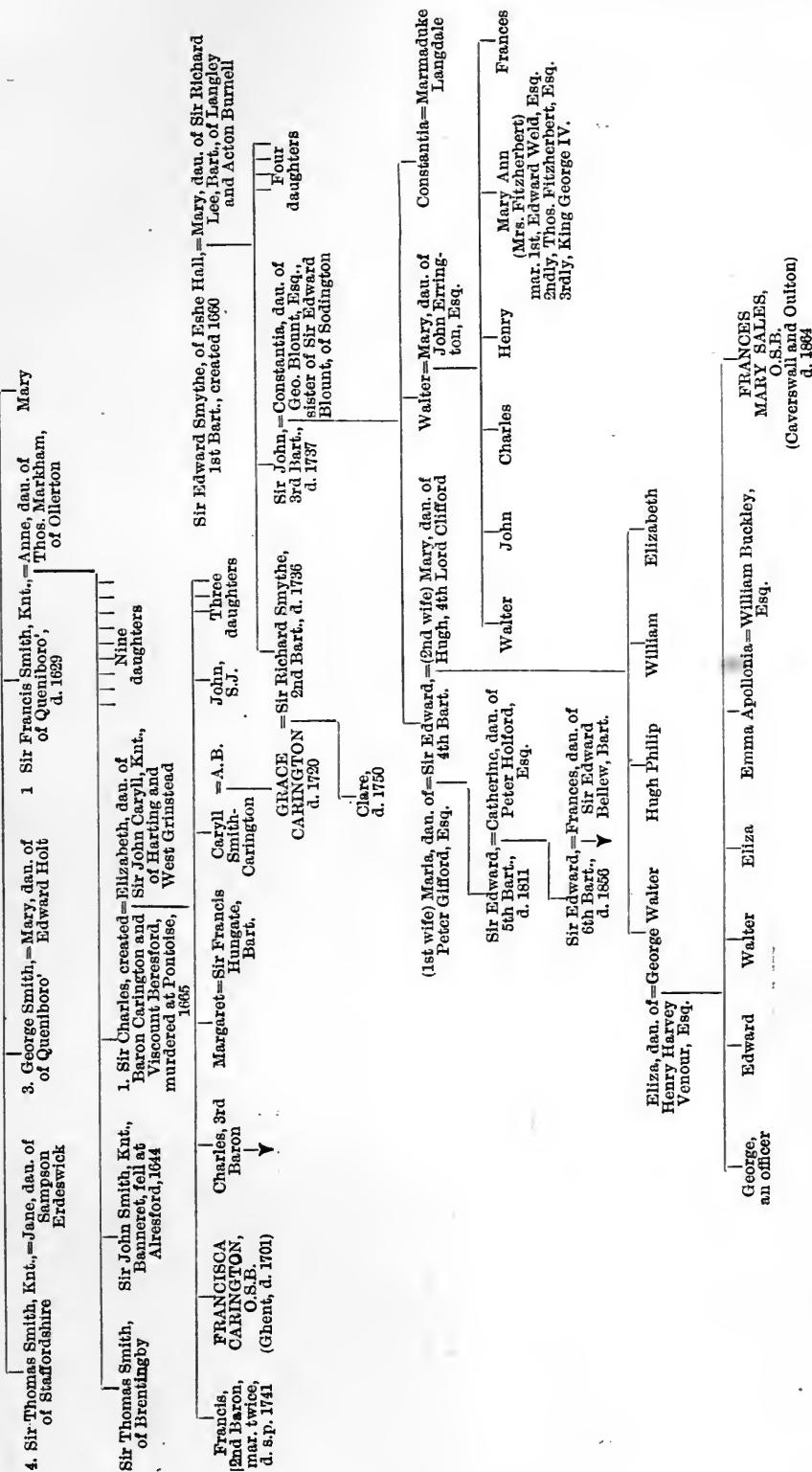
Roger Lawson, of Heaton, = Dorothy, dau. of Sir
co. Northumberland,
d. 1613 or 1614 in
his father's lifetime



No. 7.—SMITH, alias CARINGTON, and SMYTHE, OF ESHE HALL.

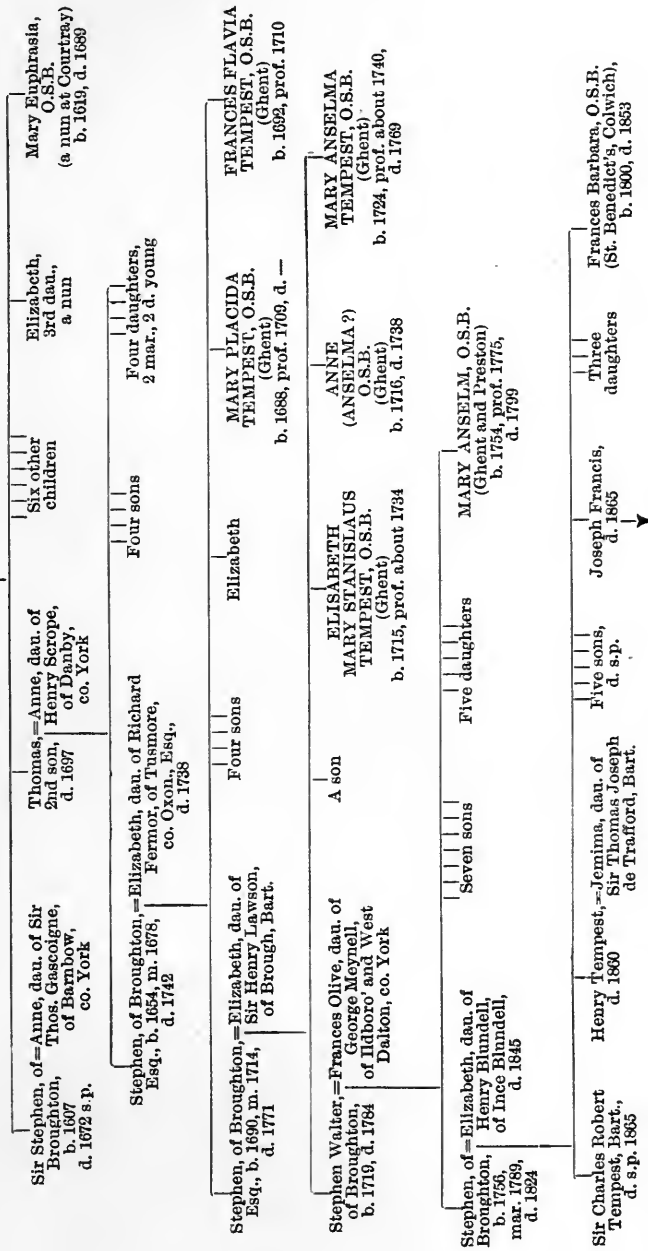
John Carington changed his name to Smyth to escape the resentment of King Henry IV., on having taken part in the rebellion of the Earls of Huntingdon, Salisbury, and Kent.

His descendant—George Smith, of Anne, dau. of Sir Thos. Gifford, Ashby Folville, of Chillington, co Staffs. d. 1607



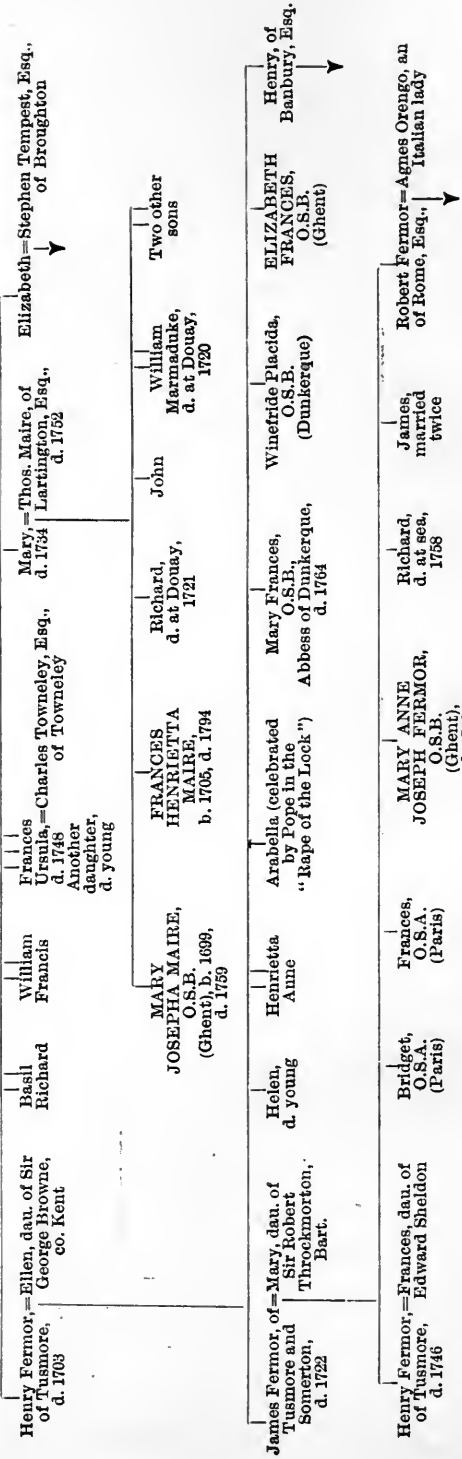
No. 9.—TEMPEST, OF BROUGHTON.

Stephen Tempest, of Broughton, Esq., son of—Susan, dau. of William Ogthehorpe,
 Sir Stephen Tempest, Knt., who had
 his estates sequestered by the
 Commonwealth, b. 1593, d. 1650



No. 10.—FERMOR.

Richard Fermor, of Somerton and=Frances, dau. of Sir — Brooke,
Tusmore, Esq., d. 1683 of Madeley, co. Salop, Kut.,
d. 1719



No. 11.—HESKETH, OF THE MAYNES AND CLAUGHTON.

William Hesketh, of The Maynes, =Mary, dau. of John Brockholes, of Claughton,
d. 1751 and Anne Barcroft



APPENDIX THE THIRD.

EPITAPHS AND INSCRIPTIONS ON TOMBS IN THE ABBEY CHURCH AT GHENT.

N.B.—The following are the only Epitaphs of our Chapel at Ghent which have been preserved, but the collection is far from complete.

NO. 1. LADY LUCY KNATCHBULL.*

La venerable abbess Madame Lucy appelée dans le siècle Elisabeth Knatchbull est morte à Gand l'an de Nostre Seigneur mil six cent vingt neuf le cinquiesme jour d'aoust aagée de quarante cinq ans, l'an dix neuvième de sa profession le sixiesme de sa prelature et superiorité dans le monastère de l'Immaculée Conception de la S^e Vierge des saintes moniales angloises de nation.

CHŃA LUCIA KNATCHBULL
Anagrammata.

Has coelis Luna jubar beatis
sis In aula beatæ ubi clarebis
extruximus hac nostræ flentes
monumenta parenti a lucendo ceu
Lucia nomen erat Lucibus
Terris, terris invidit olimpus
Eripuitque solo Lumina digna polo
Sicque ibas coelis nova Luna
jubarquet beatis, his clarebit
ait nomen, et omen ait.

NO. 2—LADY EUGENIA POULTON.

Hic jacet veneranda admodum dñā Eugenia Poulton Abbatissa secunda hujus Monasterii quæ felicissime obdormivit in Domino anno salutis M.D. c. x. l. v. die ix Novembris, ætatis anno l x l, professionis x l i., prælaturæ xvi. Alterum hanc e cœlo suo dedere hæc claustra sideribus præsidem suis, Virginem genere nobilem, virtute nobiliorem, religione sanctam, dignitate inclytam, candore animi amabilem, zelo Legum admirandam, his, superstes funeri, cœlum virtutibus petiis felicis anima casta spolia huic tumulo reliquit.

* We can only procure a French version of Lady Lucy's Epitaph, but there can be little doubt that the original was in Latin like the others. The version given above is from an old MS. at East Bergholt.

IN ENGLISH.

Here lies the venerable Lady Eugenia Poulton, second Abbess of this Monastery, who died most happily in the Lord on the 9th day of November in the year of grace 1645, in the 65th year of her age, the 41st of her religious profession, and the 16th of her prelatute. This Virgin, noble by birth, more noble by virtue, holy in religion, illustrious in dignity, attractive for her candour of soul, admirable in her zeal for rule, the luminaries above have also claimed as a safeguard to their satellites. These her virtues have found for her chaste soul a home in heaven. The tomb retains nought but her dust.

No. 3.—LADY MARY ROPER.

Domina Maria Roper Abbatissa hujusque cœnobii, nobileum Virginum Anglarum Deliciæ et Decus, filia, soror, amyta nobilissimorum Baronum Teynham procerum Angliæ, adolescentulam adhuc, splendor natalium, forma venustas, virtutis Indoles, Morumque suavitas, Illustrium procerum Examine onerabant. At illa Mendacem nuptiarum pompam aspernata, unice Christum deperiit et contubernium castitatis In quo Triginta unum annos professa paruit humiliter præfuit modeste decessit desideratissima cœlo et cœnobio æmulis. Salve cinis virginee, sancte, nobilis, pax sit perennis sic ora opere tramitem edoctus tuo pacis salutis, ob: april: 1650. Christophorus baro de Teynham et par Angliæ Nepos mæstissimus. P.P.

IN ENGLISH.

Lady Mary Roper, Abbess, the Pride and Delight of this Monastery of noble English Virgins, daughter, sister, and aunt of the most noble Barons of Teynham, Peers of England, while still in the flower of her youth was well worthy of her illustrious ancestors by the nobility of her birth, the beauty of her person, the integrity and sweetness of her disposition. She, despising the deceitful pomp of marriage, sought only Christ and a life of chastity. During the thirty-one years of her profession she obeyed with humility and governed with modesty, till she departed this life, desired by the inmates of heaven even more than by those of her Monastery. Hail virginal, holy and noble ashes! May you have everlasting rest, for full well have you been trained up by word and deed in the way of peace and happiness. She died in April 1650.

Christopher Baron of Teynham and Peer of England, her sorrowing nephew [raised this Monument.]

No. 4.—LADY SEDLEY.

Hic jacet perillustris Domina Catharina Savage, illustrissimi Comitis de Rivers Filiæ, et perillustris Domini, Domini Caroli Sedley Equitis Aurati Conjux cujus memoriæ grati obsequii monumentum hoc posuit pius affectus. Obiit 1 Julii 1705. R.I.P.

IN ENGLISH.

Here lies the illustrious Lady Catherine Savage, daughter of the most Illustrious Earl of Rivers and wife of the illustrious gentleman Sir Charles Sedley, Knight, to whose

memory [our] grateful affection has raised this monument. She died on the 1st of July 1705. May she rest in peace.

No. 5.—MRS. BLUNDELL.

Dña Mary Blundell meliori sui parte cœlesti illata quæ post lenam immolationem in liberis sex Deo factam, viro defuncto septimam in se ipsa factura victima laureata in cœlos evolavit quod restabat sacrificio peragendi felicius ibidem suppletura. R.I.P.

IN ENGLISH.

Here lieth interred Mrs. Mary Blundell, her better part belonging to heaven. After an easy sacrifice made to God in her six children, her husband being dead, she was about to become in her own person a seventh victim, when, laurel crowned, she passed away to heaven, more happily to supply what remained wanting to her sacrifice.

No. 6.—SIR WALTER KIRKHAM BLOUNT.

Hic jacet Gualterus Kirkham Blount Baronettus ex antiqua et illustri familia Blount de Sodington in Comitatu Worcestriæ, primogenitus Georgii Blount Baronetti et Mariæ Kirkham Blagden in Comitatu Devonæ heredis, ex hac vita migravit anno ætatis suæ 80 Junii 17, A.D. 1717. R.I.P.

IN ENGLISH.

Here lies Walter Kirkham Blount, Baronet, of the ancient and illustrious family of Blount of Sodington, in the county of Worcester, eldest son of George Blount, Baronet, and Mary Kirkham, heiress of Blagden, in the county of Devon. He departed this life in the 80th year of his age, on the 17th of June, 1717. May he rest in peace.

No. 7.—MRS. HOWARD.

Hic carnis exuvias deposuit beatam expectans resurrectionem perillustris admodum Domina, D^a Maria Anna Howard, angla conjux illustrissimi Domini, D. Roberti Howard, armigeri in Hoccross in comitatu Staffordiensi, quæ vitam hanc mortatam cum immortalis commutavit die 11 Aprilis, 1718, ætatis suæ 41.

R.I.P.

Hic monumentum pia sed dolens filia D. Winefrida Howard patientissimæ parienti purissima parentavit anno quo supra.

IN ENGLISH.

Here hath the very illustrious lady, Mary Anne Howard, an English woman, and wife of the most illustrious gentleman, Mr. Robert Howard, Esquire, of Hoccross [Hoar Cross] in the County of Stafford, laid down her body of flesh in expectation of a blessed

resurrection. She exchanged this mortal life for an immortal one on the 11th of April, 1718, of her age 41. May she rest in peace.

Her loving but sorrowing daughter, Mistress Winefride Howard, raised this monument to the memory of her most patient mother, in the year aforesaid.

No. 8.—GRACE LADY SMYTHE.

Hic jacent exuviæ illustris dominæ Gratianæ Carrington, Domini Richardi Smythe de Essche equitis aurati uxor, clara ipsam, clarior pietate longa et dura tollerantia clarissima hæresios fugiens exulavit mundum spernans hoc in monasterio se sepelivit vix ex voto ignota jam hominibus soli Deo nota hic vixit, diuturno tandem morbo exhausta devixit ut vixerat pie, anno salutis, Aprilis, 1720. R.I.P.

IN ENGLISH.

Here lie the remains of the illustrious lady, Grace Carington, wife of Sir Richard Smythe, of Eshe, Knight; illustrious of herself, she was more illustrious by her piety, and most illustrious by her long and patient endurance. To fly from the scenes of heresy she went into exile, despised the world, and buried herself in this monastery. Thus, unknown to the world and known only to God, did she live here. At last, worn out by a long and tedious sickness, she died piously as she had ever lived, in April of the year, 1720. May she rest in peace.

No. 9.—MRS. PETRE,

(D.O.M.)

Hic jacet illustrissima dñā, dñā Maria Petre, vidua illustrissimi Domini Thomæ Petre baronis in Writtle et Angliæ paoris de comitatu Essexidæ, filiæ nobilis viri Thomæ de Clifton equitis aurati de comitatu. Obiit Feb. 15 anno 1730. R.I.P.

IN ENGLISH.

Here lies the most illustrious lady, Lady Mary Petre, widow of the most illustrious Lord Thomas Petre, Baron, of Writtle in the county of Essex, and Peer of the English realm, the daughter of the noble gentleman Thomas Clifton, knight of the county. She died on the 15th of February, 1730. May she rest in peace.

No. 10.—MISS ELIZABETH FITZGERALD.

Hic tumulata jacet Elizabeth Fitzgerald, filia prænobilis Domini Thomæ et Henriettæ Fitzgerald, armigeri, Domini de Moghennii, Turlach, Rochfier, &c., de Comitatu Mayo in Hybernia, quæ obiit 20 Aprilis A^d 1742.

IN ENGLISH.

Here lies interred Elizabeth Fitzgerald, daughter of the noble gentleman Thomas and Henrietta Fitzgerald, Esquire, Lord of Mohena, Turlough, Rochfier, &c., in the county of Mayo in Ireland, who died on the 20th of April A.D. 1742.

No. 11.—MR. FRANCIS TASBURGH.

Hic jacet prænobilis Dominus Dñus Franciscus Tasburgh D. Bodney, armiger, obiit 5 Januarii 1747, ætatis 63 an. R.I.P.

IN ENGLISH

Here lies the noble gentleman Francis Tasburgh of Bodney, Esquire. He died on the 5th of January, 1747, aged 63 years. May he rest in peace.

No. 12.—MR. JOHN MESSENGER.

Hic jacet prænobilis Dominus Dñus Joannes Messenger, Armiger de Foutanis, obiit die 5 Decemb, 1749. R.I.P.

IN ENGLISH.

Here lies the noble gentleman Mr. John Messenger, Esq., of Fountains [Abbey] who died on the 5th of December, 1749. May he rest in peace.

No. 13.—MR. GEORGE MARKHAM.*

Memoriæ præclarissimi viri ac prænobilis Domini Georgii Marckham Armigeri Domini de Claxby in Comitatu Lincolnæ, qui obiit die 23 Feb A^d. 1760 ætatis 60. Hoc marmoreum posuit perenne amoris ac doloris monumentum mœrens ejus et piissima conjux prænobilis Domina Maria Salvin de Croxdale in Comitatu Palatinatus Dunhelm, bina superstite prole Maria scilicet et Catharina Marckham. R.I.P.

IN ENGLISH.

To the memory of the illustrious man and noble gentleman George Markham, Esquire, Lord of Claxby in the County of Lincoln, who died on the 23rd of February, A.D., 1760, of his age 60. His loving and sorrowing wife the noble Mistress Mary Salvin of Croxdale in the County Palatinate of Durham raised this marble monument as a token of her love and sorrow. He leaves two children, Mary and Catherine Markham. May he rest in peace.

* This gentleman was the great great nephew of Dames Elisabeth and Margaret Markham, who had been professed at Ghent in 1632 and 1639 respectively.

APPENDIX THE FOURTH.

No. 1.—ABBESSES OF THE MONASTERY.

1. Right Rev. Lady Lucy Knatchbull—Jan., 1624. Died Aug. 5th, 1629.
 2. R.R. Lady Eugenia Poulton—Aug. 10th, 1629. Resigned Nov. 19th, 1642.
 3. R.R. Lady Mary Roper—Dec 4th, 1642. Died April 20th, 1650.
 4. R.R. Lady Mary Knatchbull—April 27th, 1650. Died March 6th, 1696.
 5. R.R. Lady Justina Petre—March, 1696. Died Dec. 7th, 1698.
 6. R.R. Lady Magdalen Lucy—Dec., 1698. Died July 7th, 1703.
 7. R.R. Lady Scholastica Gerard—July, 1703. Died Sept. 6th, 1711.
 8. R.R. Lady Mary Knatchbull, the 2nd—Sept., 1711. Died 1727 or 1730.
 9. R.R. Lady Cecilia Tyldesley—July 12th, 1730. Died 1736.
 10. R.R. Lady Magdalen Lucy, the 2nd—1736. Died 1761.
 11. R.R. Lady Mary Baptist Phillips—1761. Died Nov. 9th, 1781.
 12. R.R. Lady Magdalen Arden—Nov., 1781. Died (at Preston) June 18th, 1797.
 13. R.R. Lady Frances Hesketh—July 17th, 1797. Died Nov. 24th, 1809.
 14. R.R. Lady Benedicta Bedingfeld—Dec. 14th, 1809. Died March 27th, 1811.
 15. R.R. Lady Aloysia Jefferson (at Caverswall)—May 4th, 1811. Resigned March 11th, 1818.
 16. R.R. Lady Teresa Shuttleworth—March 1st, 1819. Died Sept. 22nd, 1837.
 17. R.R. Lady Juliana Forster—Oct. 9th, 1837. Died (at Oulton) Feb. 2nd, 1869.
 18. R.R. Lady Catherine Beech—July 26th, 1869.
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No. 2.—PROFESSED RELIGIOUS OF THE ABBEY OF GHENT.*

PROFESSED AT BRUSSELS.

DAMES.	NATIVE OR FAMILY PLACE.	BORN.	PROFESSED.	DIED.
1 Eugenia (Jane) Poulton, 2nd Abbess	Desborough Hall, co. Northampton	1580	May 12th, 1605	Nov. 9th, 1645
2 Lucy (Elizabeth) Knatchbull, 1st Abbess	Kent	1584	Jan. 11th, 1611	Aug. 5th, 1629
3 Magdalen (Elizabeth) Digby ...	Tilton, co. Leicester	1583	Jan. 11th, 1611	Sept. 1st, 1659
4 Mary Roper, 3rd Abbess ...	Linstead Lodge, co. Kent ...	1598	Nov. 10th, 1619	Apr. 20th, 1650

PROFESSED AT GHENT.

1 Elizabeth Bradbury ... ..	...	...	May 12th, 1624	Nov. 9th, 1630
2 Mary Knatchbull	Kent: born in Ireland ...	1608	July 2nd, 1626	Aug. 15th, 1627
3 Catherine (Elizabeth) Wigmore, 1st Abbess of Boulogne ...	Lutton, co. Hereford ...	1596	July 2nd, 1626	Oct. 28th, 1656
4 Gertrude (Margaret) Lawson ...	Heaton, co. Northumberland ...	1607	Aug. 12th, 1626	Living in 1672
5 Mary Pease ... ..	...	...	Aug. 12th, 1626	Dec. 8th, 1643
6 Mary Southcote	Alberley, co. Surrey (?) ...	1611	Dec. 8th, 1627	Feb. 12th, 1641
7 Margaret Knatchbull	Kent ... ..	...	Dec. 8th, 1627	Apr. 4th, 1637
8 Hieronyma Waldegrave ... ..	...	1603	Dec. 8th, 1627	July 22nd, 1635
9 Paula (Margaret) Knatchbull ...	Kent	1607	Dec. 8th, 1627	Living in 1682
10 Scholastica (Margaret) Roper ...	Linstead Lodge, co. Kent ...	...	Sep. 14th, 1628	Mar. 7th, 1641
11 Mary Flallan (?) ... ..	...	...	...	...
12 Mary Knatchbull, 4th Abbess ...	Kent	1610	Dec. 8th, 1628	Mar. 6th, 1696
13 Mary Monson	Lincolnshire	1605	June 11th, 1630	Apr. 8th, 1658
14 Thecla (Philippa) Bedingfeld ...	Reddingfield, co. Suffolk ...	1609	June 11th, 1630	Dec. 14th, 1636
15 Mary Trevelyan	Cornwall	1610	Oct. 20th, 1630	Aug. 11th, 1634
16 Benedicta (Mary) Lawson	Heaton, co. Northumberland ...	1610	June 24th, 1631	Living in 1672
17 Alexia (Margaret) Grey ... ..	...	1606	June 24th, 1631	Dec. 20th, 1640
18 Aloysia (Helen) Beaumont	Grace-Dieu, co. Leicester ...	1612	June 24th, 1631	Apr. 9th, 1635
19 Lucy Perkins (Pontoise) ... ..	...	1610	Oct. 21st, 1631	Feb. 1st, 1662, at Pontoise
20 Elizabeth Markham	Ollerton, co. Notts	1613	Feb. 3rd, 1632	Jan. 12th, 1664
21 Ignatia (Frances) Fortescue ...	Salden, co. Bucks	1616	May 6th, 1632	Living in 1672
22 Mechtilda Plumpton ... ..	...	1617	Sept. 8th, 1632	Living in 1672
23 Eugenia (Margaret) Bedingfeld ...	Reddingfield, co. Suffolk ...	1619	June 26th, 1633	Feb. 21st, 1637
24 Anne (Mary) Neville, 4th Abbess of Pontoise ... ..	...	1608	July 2nd, 1634	Dec. 15th, 1689, at Pontoise
25 Barbara (Grace) Fortescue	Salden, co. Bucks	1617	July 2nd, 1634	Feb. 15th, 1666
26 Flavia Cary, 2nd Abbess of Ypres ...	...	1617	Oct. 15th, 1634	Feb. 20th, 1686, at Ypres
27 Winefride Smythe ... ..	...	1608	Mar. 31st, 1635	Living in 1672
28 Justina Corham	Hampshire: born at Antwerp ...	...	Sept. 11th, 1635	Aug. 15th, 1638
29 Cornelia Corham	Hampshire: born at Antwerp ...	1616	Sept. 11th, 1635	March 15th, 1657
30 Marina Beaumont, 1st Abbess of Ypres ... ..	...	1617	July 2nd, 1637	Aug. 27th, 1682, at Ypres
31 Ursula Butler (Ypres) ... ..	...	1620	Aug. 6th, 1637	April 10th, 1685
32 Mary Digby	Seaton, co. Rutland	1612	Aug. 6th, 1637	July 8th, 1641
33 Aloysia German ... ..	...	1606	Aug. 6th, 1637	Living in 1672
34 Constantia Savage (Dunkerque) ...	Rocksavage, co. Chester ...	1620	Aug. 15th, 1638	April 1st, 1687, at Dunkerque
35 Dorothy (Catherine) Cary	Exeter House, co. Devon ...	1622	Sept. 14th, 1638	April 13th, 1653
36 M. Ignatia (Margaret) Coningsby (widow) née Corham	Hampshire	1583	Sept. 11th, 1639	March 23rd, 1657
37 Margaret Markham (Pontoise) ...	Ollerton, co. Notts	1622	Dec. 27th, 1639	July 25th, 1717, at Pontoise
38 Eugenia Thorold, 3rd Abbess of Pontoise	Hough, near Grantham, co. Lincoln	1623	Dec. 27th, 1639	Dec. 21st, 1667 at Pontoise
39 Bridget (Dorothy) Guildridge (widow) née Dorvolie ... ..	...	1570	Feb. 14th, 1640	Feb. 25th, 1647

* This list is not quite complete, several names having been lost, chiefly between the dates 1740 and 1780.

PROFESSED AT GHENT.—CONTINUED.

DAMES.	NATIVE OR FAMILY PLACE.	BORN.	PROFESSED.	DIED.
40 Christina (Anne) Forster, 2nd Abbess of Pontoise ... ..	... ..	1619	Jan. 13th, 1641	Dec. 16th, 1661
41 Thecla (Margaret) Bedingfeld ...	Amersden and Brussels ...	1624	1642, on her death-bed	Feb. 20th, 1642
42 Teresa (Jane) Gardiner (widow) née Bream	Essex	1590	May 7th, 1642	May 12th, 1650
43 Monica Bartlett (widow) née Kelloway ... ..	... ..	1603	May 7th, 1642	Living in 1672
44 Elizabeth Wakeman	Beckford, co. Gloucester	1629	1642, on her death-bed	July 12th, 1642
45 Frances (Mary) Roper	Linstead Lodge, Kent ...	1623	Oct. 20th, 1642	Living in 1672
46 Philippa Symons ... ..	... ..	1623	Dec. 15th, 1642	Living in 1672
47 Scholastica (Constantia) Heneage	Hainton, co. Lincoln ...	1628	May 30th, 1644	June 25th, 1664, at St. Omer
48 Augustina Tichborne	Hampshire	1611	Feb. 5th, 1646	Living in 1672
49 Francisca Carington	Wotton, co. Warwick ...	1628	April 9th, 1646	Jan. 2nd, 1701
50 Agatha Webb (Dunkerque) ...	... ..	...	Feb. 5th, 1647	June 30th, at Dunkerque
51 Aldegonde Finch ... ..	... ..	1614	Feb. 5th, 1647	Feb. 1st, 1692
52 Alexia (Catherine) Maurice	Lantillio, co. Monmouth	1625	Jan. 28th, 1648	April 19th, 1657
53 M. Joseph (Mary) Lawson ...	Brough Hall, co. York ...	1621	Sept. 12th, 1648	Living in 1712
54 Helena Wayte (Dunkerque) ...	... ..	1614	Sept. 12th, 1648	Feb. 2nd, at Dunkerque
55 Mary Bedingfeld (Brussels)	Amersden and Brussels...	1624	April 13th, 1649	April 21st, 1685, at Brussels
56 Mary Minshall ... ..	... ..	1622	1649	Nov., 1693
57 Placida Lopez de Ulloa... ..	... ..	1618	July 11th, 1649	Living in 1672
58 Mary Caryll, 1st Abbess of Dunkerque	Harting, co. Sussex ...	1631	Feb. 6th, 1650	Aug. 21st, 1712, at Dunkerque
59 Agnes Wakeman	Beckford, co. Gloucester	1629	Feb. 6th, 1650	Between 1700 and 1703
60 Anne Pordage	Rodmersham, co. Kent ...	...	Oct. 5th, 1650	Living in 1672
61 Honora Burke	Ireland	1638	1652, on her death-bed	Aug. 7th, 1652
62 Elizabeth Ingleby (?)				
63 Justina (Frances) Petre, 5th Abbess	Cranham, co. Sussex ...	1636	July 28th, 1653	Dec. 7th, 1698
64 Catherine Petre	Cranham, co. Sussex ...	...	July 14th, 1654	Between 1672 and 1696
65 Paula Hall ... ..	... ..	1638	July 14th, 1654	Between 1700 and 1711
66 Bridget Savage	Rocksavage, co. Chester	...	July 14th, 1654	Aug. 29th, 1666
67 Mary Fermor	Tusmore, co. Oxon ...	1638	Aug. 10th, 1655	Between 1700 and 1711
68 Victoria Monson... ..	Lincolnshire	1636	Jan. 25th, 1656	Living in 1711
69 Christina Monson (Dunkerque)	Lincolnshire ... ..	...	Jan. 25th, 1656	Sept. 9th, at Dunkerque
70 Valeria Stanley ... ..	... ..	1639	Aug. 15th, 1656	Between 1700 and 1711
71 Frances Symons... ..	... ..	1626	July 15th, 1657	Between 1700 and 1711
72 Margaret Carewe ... ..	... ..	...	April 8th, 1658	March 20th, 1662
73 Teresa Mannock... ..	... ..	1639	Jan. 12th, 1659	Living in 1711
74 Anastasia Maurice (Dunkerque)	Lantillio, co. Monmouth	...	Jan. 12th, 1659	Jan. 4th, at Dunkerque
75 Viviana Eyre ... ..	... ..	1643	Nov. 29th, 1659	Between 1696 and 1700
76 Xaveria (Anne) Pordage (Dun- kerque)... ..	Rodmersham, co. Kent ...	...	Apr. 18th, 1661	Apr. 26th, 1713, at Dunkerque
77 Dorothy Morgan... ..	... ..	...	Apr. 18th, 1661	
78 Martha Kempe ... ..	... ..	...	Apr. 18th, 1661	
79 Benedicta (Mary) Middlemore (widow), née Morgan ...	... ..	...	July 11th, 1662	Nov. 11th, 166-
80 Lucy Morgan ... ..	... ..	...	Apr. 22nd, 1663	Living in 1672
81 Mary Bryan ... ..	... ..	...	Apr. 22nd, 1663	Nov. 9th, 1669
82 Henrietta Fermor	Tusmore, co. Oxon ...	...	May 29th, 1663	Between 1692 and 1696
83 Xaveria Paston ... ..	... ..	...	Apr. 28th, 1664	Between 1692 and 1696
84 Mary Lucy	Warwickshire	1633	July 6th, 1664	Between 1696 and 1700
85 Elizabeth Yarbrough ... ..	... ..	...	July 11th, 1665	Living in 1672
86 Apollonia Porter... ..	... ..	1649	Aug. 2nd, 1666	Living in 1711
87 Eugenia Pordage	Rodmersham, co. Kent ...	...	Aug. 2nd, 1666	Between 1693 and 1696
88 Scholastica (Catherine) Plowden (widow) née Audley ...	... ..	1607	Jan. 27th, 1667	Living in 1672
89 Cecilia Tasburgh ... ..	... ..	...	Oct. 5th, 1669	Between 1682 and 1696
90 Maura Fitzwilliam ... ..	... ..	1646	Oct. 5th, 1669	Living in 1725
91 Anna Maria de Moll ... ..	... ..	1657	1678	Between 1696 and 1700
92 Magdalen Lucy, 6th Abbess ...	Warwickshire	1656	1680	July 7th, 1703

PROFESSED AT GHENT.—CONTINUED.

DAMES.	NATIVE OR FAMILY PLACE.	BORN.	PROFESSED.	DIED.
93 Anna Westby ... ..	...	1656	1681	Living in 1725
94 Mary Knatchbull, 8th Abbess ...	Kent	1666	1684	1727 or 1730
95 Scholastica (Frances) Gerard, 7th Abbess	Lancashire	1657	1686	Sept. 11th, 1711
96 Constantia (Catherine) Howard	Arndel Castle, co. Sussex ...	1670	1687	Between 1725 and 1732
97 Magdalen Lucy, 10th Abbess ...	Warwickshire	1688	1705	1761
98 Cecilia (Anne) Tyldesley, 9th Abbess	Lancashire	1688	1707	1736
99 Mary (Frances) Blundell	Crosby Hall, co. Lancashire ...	1690	1707 or 1708	
100 Winefride Lucy	Warwickshire	1691	About 1708	Living in 1748
101 Augustina (Winefride) Blundell	Crosby Hall, co. Lancashire ...	1688	About 1708	Living in 1743
102 Placida (Mary) Tempest	Broughton Hall, co. York ...	1688	1710	Living in 1738
103 Scholastica Stanley ... ..	... ..	1692	1710	Living in 1731
104 Flavia (Frances) Tempest	Broughton, co. York	1693	1711	Living in 1749
105 Helen White ... ..	... ..	1694	August, 1711	Living in 1748
106 Gertrude (Catherine) Clifford ...	Chudleigh, co. Devon	1694	August, 1711	Died early
107 Ignatia (Mary) Clifford	Chudleigh, co. Devon	1695	1712	May 7th, 1740
108 Justina Blount	Worcestershire	1692	1712	Living in 1725
109 Benedicta Wilson ... ..	... ..	1692	1713	July 30th, 1769
110 Ruperta Browne	Ireland	1698	1716	Sept. 21st, 1755
111 Mary Anne Gerard	Lancashire	1699	1717	Living in 1748
112 Frances (Elizabeth) Fermor ...	Tusmore co. Oxon.	1699	1718	Between 1738 and 1748
113 M. Bernard (Dorothy) Caryll ...	Hampshire	1699	1718	Living in 1731
114 Josepha (Mary) Maire	Lartington Hall, co. York ...	1699	1718	About 1759
115 Gertrude Hastings ... ..	... ..	1703	1723	Living in 1736
116 Xaveria Severn ... ..	... ..	1693	1723	Living in 1725
117 Ildefonsa (Preston) Clifford ...	Chudleigh, co. Devon	1707	1724	Living in 1748
118 Mary Scholastica Haggerston ...	Haggerston, co. Northumberland	...	About 1728	Before 1736
119 Mary Michael Tyldesley	Lancashire ... ..	...	About 1728-30	1759
120 Romana Alexander ... ..	... ..	...	About 1730	Apr. 26th, 1790
121 Teresa Martins	Flanders ... ..	...	About 1730	Sept. 7th, 1755
122 M. Baptist (Elizabeth) Phillips, 11th Abbess	Ickford, co. Bucks	1713	1731	Nov. 9th, 1781
123 Agnes Gillibrand	Lancashire ... ..	...	About 1731	Aug. 24th, 1783
124 M. Stanislaus (Elizabeth) Tempest	Broughton, co. York	1715	June 23rd, 1733	Living in 1749
125 M. Anselm (Anne) Tempest (?)	Broughton, co. York	1716	Probably 1733	Apr. 21st, 1738
126 Cecilia Collins ... ..	... ..	1716	About 1736	July 10th, 1788
127 Clare Throckmorton	Essex	1713	About 1737	Nov. 24th, 1798, at Preston
128 Anne Joseph (Mary) Fermor ...	Tusmore, co. Oxon ... ..	...	About 1738	1743
129 Catherine Sheldon	Steeple Barton	1715	1738 or 1740	Feb. 5th, 1791
130 Maura Grosvenor ... ..	... ..	...	About 1740	October, 1750
131 Aloysia (Mary) Hesketh	The Maynes, co. Lancaster ...	1720	About 1740	Living in 1748
132 M. Anselm (Mary) Tempest ...	Broughton, co. York	1724	About 1740	April 14th, 1769
133 Mary Frances Blount ... ..	...	...	...	...
134 Benedicta Ferrers	Baddesley Clinton, co. Warwick	...	...	...
135 Magdalen Mainwaring ... ..	...	...	...	...
136 Clementina Arden	Mannel Hall, co. Worcester ...	...	...	Jan. 8th, 1781
137 Gertrude Butler ... ..	... ..	...	...	Feb. 9th, 1776
138 Mary Joseph Bowyer ... ..	... ..	...	After 1760	Sept. 10th, 1779
139 Scholastica Clavering ... ..	... ..	...	...	Jan. 14th, 1779
140 Magdalen Arden, 12th Abbess	Mannel Hall, co. Worcester ...	1736	1755 or 1756	June 18th, 1797, at Preston
141 Frances (Catherine) Hesketh, 13th Abbess	The Maynes, co. Lancaster ...	1728	April, 1756	Nov. 24th, 1809, at Preston
142 Placida (Mary) Jones	Dingheston, co. Monmouth ...	1734	1756	Sept. 4th, 1806, at Preston
143 Mary Bernard Pullen ... ..	... ..	...	...	Dec. 11th, 1792
144 Teresa Hodgson ... ..	... ..	1744	1763	June 12th, 1794
145 Aloysia Langdale ... ..	... ..	...	...	Dec. 24th, 1782
146 Eugenia (Teresa) Pulton	London ... ..	...	July 13th, 1768	Jan. 5th, 1781
147 Xaveria (Rachel) Boone	Maryland, N. America	1749	1769	Jan. 5th, 1798, at Preston
148 M. Anselm (Mary) Tempest ...	Broughton, co. York	1754	May 10th, 1775	Jan. 3rd, 1799, at Preston
149 Benedicta (Mary) Bedingfeld, 14th Abbess	York	1758	May 10th, 1775	Mar. 27th, 1811, at Preston

PROFESSED AT GHENT.—CONTINUED.

DAMES.	NATIVE OR FAMILY PLACE.	BORN.	PROFESSED.	DIED.
150 M. Stanislaus (Mary Ann) White	Essex	1752	May 10th, 1775	Feb. 6th, 1819, at Caverswall
151 Mary Baptist Farrar	Downholland, co. Lancaster ...	1731	1779	June 30th, 1797, at Preston
152 M. Joseph (Jane) Molyneux ...	... ..	1753	1780	Jan. 19th, 1833, at Caverswall
153 Clementina (Margaret) Adcroft	Lancashire	1765	1788	Aug. 25th, 1815, at Caverswall
154 M. Sales (Anne) Eldridge ...	London ... ..	...	...	At Velsique
155 Magdalen (Margaret) Gibson ...	Northumberland	1766	June 1st, 1789	Jan. 29th, 1837, at Caverswall

PROFESSED AT PRESTON.

156 Clare (Elizabeth) Hall	York	1779	May 6th, 1801	Nov. 29th, 1851, at Caverswall
157 M. Bernard Lucas	Warwickshire	1780	June 24th, 1801	Mar. 16th, 1802
158 Aloysia (Elizabeth) Jefferson, 15th Abbess ... ..	... ..	1774	May 8th, 1802	Feb. 6th, 1824, at Wolverhampton
159 Gertrude (Elizabeth) Howe ...	... ..	1784	Feb. 2nd, 1805	Mar. 23rd, 1834, at Caverswall
160 M. Bernard (Elizabeth) Wareing	Goosenargh, co. Lancaster ...	1788	Oct. 18th, 1808	July 31st, 1872, at Oulton
161 Teresa (Anne) Shuttleworth, 16th Abbess	Cannon Hall, co. York	1789	Oct. 18th, 1808	Sep. 22nd, 1837, at Caverswall
162 Agnes (Anne) Carr	Preston, co. Lancaster	1789	Oct. 25th, 1809	Dec. 14th, 1814, at Caverswall

PROFESSED AT CAVERSWALL.

163 Xaveria (Anne) Hartley	Burnley, co. Lancaster	1788	June 5th, 1811	June 7th, 1864, at Oulton
164 Anne Joseph (Dorothy) Eccles...	Liverpool	1793	July 22nd, 1812	May 27th, 1853
165 Scholastica (Elizabeth) Roskell	Garstang, co. Lancaster... ..	1790	Feb. 3rd, 1814	May 4th, 1878, at Oulton
166 Angustina (Ellen) Eccles, Oblate	Liverpool	1790	May 10th, 1814	Mar. 4th, 1836
167 Etheldreda (Anne) Bayliss ...	Wolverhampton	1792	Oct. 24th, 1815	Dec. 31st, 1881, at Oulton
168 Juliana (Alice) Forster, 17th Abbess	Burradon, co. Northumberland...	1794	Oct. 7th, 1817	Feb. 2nd, 1869, at Oulton
169 Placida (Elizabeth) Shuttleworth	Hodsock Park, co. Notts	1796	Sept. 21st, 1820	Aug. 13th, 1844
170 M. Sales (Elizabeth) O'Callaghan	Ireland, born in Manchester ...	1797	Sept., 1882, on her death-bed	Oct. 16th, 1822
171 Winefride (Mary Ann) Gregson	Lancashire	1802	Oct. 12th, 1824	Sept. 11th, 1848
172 Agnes (Anne) Young	Market Rasen, co. Lincoln ...	1798	May 3rd, 1828	March 6th, 1889, at Oulton
173 Frances (Sarah) Gould	Winchester	1802	May 3rd, 1828	Jan. 28th, 1892, ditto
174 M. Sales (Frances) Smythe ...	... ..	1809	Nov. 25th, 1828	Oct. 16th, 1864, ditto
175 Agatha (Teresa) Hoy	Stoke-by-Nayland, co. Suffolk ...	1807	Nov. 25th, 1828	May 21st, 1885, ditto
176 Teresa (Anne) Smith	Drax Abbey, co. York	1793	June 17th, 1834	Nov. 26th, 1878, ditto
177 Catherine (Elizabeth) Beech, 18th Abbess	Stone, co. Staffs	1813	Aug. 23rd, 1836	
178 Gertrude (Georgina) O'Farrell...	Dublin	1821	Sept. 3rd, 1840	Jan. 21st, 1889, at Oulton
179 Aloysia (Alice) Rimmer... ..	Huyton, co. Lancaster	1819	Sept. 3rd, 1840	March 9th, 1878, ditto
180 M. Baptist (Elizabeth) Forster.	Burradon, co. Northumberland	1802	July 6th, 1843	July 24th, 1889, ditto
181 Juliana (Jane) Marsland	Burnley, co. Lancaster	1815	Sept. 3rd, 1844	April 6th, 1892, ditto
182 Alphonsa (Mary Ann) Furniss...	Manchester	1817	Sept. 23rd, 1845	
183 M. Stanislaus (Frances) Bowdon	Southgate, co. Derby	1821	Nov. 23rd, 1847	May 12th, 1884, at Oulton
184 Walburga (Eliza) Raby... ..	Leicester	1822	July 3rd, 1849	Apr. 10th, 1855, at Oulton
185 Benedicta (Elizabeth) Rimmer...	Huyton, co. Lancaster	1826	Oct. 12th, 1852	
186 Winefride (Jane) Dawber ...	Wigan, co. Lancaster	1824	June 24th, 1853	

PROFESSED AT OULTON.

187 Margaret (Ellen) Coupe	Little Radburn, co. Lancaster ...	1840	May 24th, 1859, on her death bed	June 21st, 1859
188 Josephine (Louisa) Davies ...	Studley, co. Warwick	1836	Oct. 25th, 1860	Dec. 5th, 1881
189 Mechtilda (Teresa) Cook	Hathersage, co. Derby	1841	Nov. 26th, 1861	Nov. 9th, 1883

PROFESSED AT OULTON.—CONTINUED.

DAMES.	NATIVE OR FAMILY PLACE.	BORN.	PROFESSED.	DIED.
190 Placida (Edith) Dunham ...	London : born at Bath ...	1838	Apr. 25th, 1862	
191 Maura (Isabella) Dunham ...	London ...	1843	July 3rd, 1863	
192 Cecilia (Mary) Turner ...	Preston, co. Lancaster ...	1839	Nov. 6th, 1866	
193 Walburga (Anne) Stott ...	Warwick : born in Manchester ...	1847	May 5th, 1868	
194 Laurentia (Agnes) Ward ...	Northwood Park, I.W. : born in Herts ...	1848	Nov. 11th, 1868	
195 Justina (Ellen) Wall ...	Stourbridge, co. Worcester ...	1841	Oct. 25th, 1870	
196 Margaret (Martha) Cope ...	Draycott, co. Stafford ...	1852	May 13th, 1873	
197 Evangelista (Frances) Furniss ...	Manchester ...	1852	Apr. 14th, 1875	
198 Clare (Jane) Jackson ...	Wigan, co. Lancaster ...	1851	Jan. 29th, 1878	
199 Scholastica Rosa Ray ...	Sydney, Australia ...	1851	July 19th, 1881	
200 Teresa (Anne) Beech ...	Longton, co. Staffs ...	1863	Oct. 7th, 1884	
201 Magdalen (Mary) McDonnell ...	Dublin ...	1854	July 16th, 1885	
202 M. Bernard (Teresa) Gibbons ...	Wolverhampton ...	1865	May 11th, 1886	
203 Gertrude (Margaret) Beech ...	Longton, co. Staffs ...	1866	Sept. 14th, 1893	

NO. 3.—LAY-SISTERS.

PROFESSED AT BRUSSELS.

LAY-SISTERS.	NATIVE OR FAMILY PLACE.	BORN.	PROFESSED.	DIED.
1 Cecily (Jane) Price ...	Herefordshire ...	...	Oct. 28th, 1604	June 23rd, 1630

PROFESSED AT GHENT.

1 Lucy (Elizabeth) Bacon ...	...	...	Mar. 25th, 1624	Aug. 31st, 1670
2 Teresa (Catherine) Matlock ...	...	1601	Aug. 28th, 1624	Nov. 27th, 1654
3 Catherine Thorold ...	...	...	June 14th, 1626	Feb. 6th, 1634
4 Anne Overlow ...	...	1597	Aug. 28th, 1626	Mar. 16th, 1650 or 59
5 Frances Wright (Dunkerque and Ypres) ...	Northamptonshire ...	...	Oct. 4th, 1628	Nov. 10th, 1673, at Ypres
6 Winefride Hall ...	...	...	Oct. 6th, 1630	Living in 1672
7 Dorothy Barefoot ...	...	...	Oct. 6th, 1630	Sept. 27th, 1634
8 Agnes Pickering (Pontoise) ...	...	...	Oct. 6th, 1630	Nov. 3rd, 1666, at Pontoise
9 Elizabeth Towers ...	...	...	Mar. 19th, 1632	Living in 1672
10 Bennet Walton ...	...	...	June 21st, 1632	1669
11 Benedicta (Isabella) Corby, (widow) née Richardson ...	...	1552	Apr. 29th, 1633	Dec. 25th, 1652
12 Mary Meynell ...	...	...	Dec. 9th, 1635	Living in 1672
13 Magdalen Howard (Dunkerque) ...	...	...	May 12th, 1637	Mar. 21st, at Dunkerque
14 Margaret Cheeth ...	...	...	Jun. 10th, 1638	Living in 1672
15 Dorothy Skrimshire ...	...	1612	May 24th, 1642	May 30th, 1645
16 Martina de Decken ...	Near Ghent ...	1611	July 6th, 1645	July 27th, 1655
17 Mary Joseph Richardson ...	...	...	Apr. 18th, 1651	Living in 1672
18 Teresa Cannon ...	...	...	Apr. 22nd, 1659	ditto
19 Catherine Scroote ...	...	...	Apr. 22nd, 1659	ditto
20 Martha Law ...	...	...	Feb. 6th, 1664	ditto
21 Scholastica Beckington ...	...	...	Apr. 29th, 1664	ditto
22 Agnes With ...	...	...	Jan. 13th, 1666	ditto
23 Mary Matchett ...	...	...	Jan. 13th, 1666	ditto
24 Mary Forster ...	...	...	Nov. 23rd, 1667	ditto
25 Marina Morgan ...	...	...	Nov. 23rd, 1667	ditto
26 Athanasia Middleton ...	...	...	Oct. 10th, 1670	ditto
27 Magdalen — ...	...	...	Before 1729	
28 Eugenia — ...	...	...	ditto	
29 Bridget — ...	...	...	ditto	

PROFESSED AT GHENT.—CONTINUED.

LAY-SISTERS.	NATIVE OR FAMILY PLACE.	BORN.	PROFESSED.	DIED.
30 Mechtilda — ... ..	... ..	...	Before 1729	1741
31 Catherine — ... ..	... ..	...	ditto	
32 Benedicta Williams ... ..	... ..	1703	1729	July 6th, 1765
33 Anne Tucker ... ..	... ..	...	...	Apr. 10th, 1771
34 Elizabeth Willacy ... ..	... ..	...	...	Dec. 20th, 1784
35 Scholastica — ... ..	... ..	...	...	About 1740
36 Xaveria Matthews ... ..	... ..	...	...	April 11th, 1778
37 Margaret Gerard ... ..	... ..	...	...	Dec. 30th, 1781
38 Frances Hendly ... ..	... ..	...	...	Mar. 12th, 1779
39 Mary Joseph Coppings ... ..	... ..	...	...	July 11th, 1779
40 Agnes White ... ..	... ..	...	...
41 Winefride Hurst... ..	... ..	...	...	May 20th, 1774
42 Aloysia Segers ... ..	... ..	...	...	July 24th, 1778
43 Scholastica (Margery) Rimmer	Lancashire	1721	1743	Sept. 7th, 1804, at Preston
44 Clare Bond ... ..	... ..	...	...	Jan. 1st, 1782
45 Placida Gore ... ..	... ..	...	...	Feb. 25th, 1782
46 Teresa Haskew ... ..	... ..	...	...	Jan. 29th, 1784
47 Frances Champ	Winchester, co. Hants	1743	1768	Jan. 16th, 1818, at Caverswall
48 Benedicta Tasker	Yorkshire	1742	1770	Apl. 30th, 1816 ditto
49 Magdalen (Jane) Edmonds ... ..	... ..	1750	July 2nd, 1778	July 18th, 1824 ditto
50 Anne (Jane) Weardon	Walton, co. Lancaster	1757	1782	Aug. 10th, 1815 ditto
51 Aloysia (Elizabeth) Gillet ... ..	... ..	1762	June 11th, 1786	Feb. 9th, 1825 ditto
52 Martha (Elizabeth) Middlehurst	Brindle, co. Lancaster	1765	June 22nd, 1789	Feb. 9th, 1837 ditto
53 Winefride Hayes... ..	Brindle, co. Lancaster	1763	1790	Apl. 15th, 1817 ditto
54 Teresa (Anna Maria) Musché	Near Ghent	1760	Nov. 9th, 1790	Nov. 7th, 1846 ditto

PROFESSED AT CAVERSWALL.

55 M. Joseph (Catherine) Ibson	Garstang, co. Lancaster	1790	Jan. 21st, 1813	June 22nd, 1839
56 Mary Davies	Liverpool	1792	Jan. 17th, 1814	Aug. 12th, 1863, at Oulton
57 Scholastica (Helen) Barlow	Garstang, co. Lancaster... ..	1796	July 4th, 1815	Mar. 23rd, 1880 ditto
58 Augustina (Helen) Smith	Preston, co. Lancaster	1794	Oct. 25th, 1815	Jan. 15th, 1881 ditto
59 Agnes Perkin	Wolverhampton, co. Staffs.	1790	Oct. 25th, 1815	Aug. 14th, 1868 ditto
60 Anne (Elizabeth) Barber	Wolverhampton, co. Staffs.	1794	Jan. 11th, 1818	Nov. 17th, 1875, at Courtrai
61 Aloysia (Jane) Daniel	Aston, co. Staffs.	1812	Nov. 22nd, 1837	
62 Juliana (Jane) Dutton	Aston, co. Staffs.... ..	1818	Nov. 28th, 1840	May 16th, 1888, at Oulton
63 Benedicta (Elizabeth) Seed	Claughton, co. Lancaster	1813	Dec. 31st, 1840	June 26th, 1848
64 Winefride (Margaret) Hope	Preston, co. Lancaster	1822	Nov. 28th, 1850	
65 Placida (Dorothy) Weardon	Chorley, co. Lancaster	1821	Nov. 28th, 1850	
66 Maura (Elizabeth) Laws	Cossey, co. Norfolk	1826	Apl. 23rd, 1851	

PROFESSED AT OULTON.

67 Lucy (Frances) Wealleans	Beanley, co. Northumberland	1829	Jan. 21st, 1858	Feb. 16th, 1874
68 Benedicta (Sarah) Blake	Coughton, co. Warwick	1841	Feb. 22nd, 1865	
69 Justina (Ruth) White	Everingham, co. York	1840	Nov. 5th, 1867	
70 Agnes (Sarah) Gibbons	Bolton, co. Lancaster	1851	Nov. 27th, 1876	
71 Frances (Hannah) Bennett	Sheepshed, co. Leicester	1865	Nov. 8th, 1886	
72 Gertrude (Teresa) Bennett	Sheepshed, co. Leicester	1863	July 18th, 1889	
73 Scholastica (Teresa) Davies	Erdington, co. Warwick... ..	1865	Oct. 8th, 1891	

No. 4.—ECCLESIASTICAL SUPERIORS OF THE COMMUNITY.

BISHOPS OF GHENT.

1. Right Rev Antoine de Trieste (Ex-Bishop of Bruges), 1622 to 1657.
2. R.R. Charles Van den Bosch (Ex-Bishop of Bruges), 1660 to 1665.
3. R.R. Eugène d'Allamont (Ex-Bishop of Ruremond), 1665 to 1673.
4. R.R. François van Horenbeke, 1676 to 1679.
5. R.R. Ignace de Grobbendouck (Ex-Bishop of Namur), 1679 to 1680.
6. R.R. Albert de Hornes, 1681 to 1694.
7. R.R. Philip Erard Van der Noot, 1694 to 1730, d. Feb. 3rd, æt. 92.
8. R.R. John Baptist de Smedt, 1732 to 1741.
9. R.R. Maximilian Van der Noot, 1742 to 1770.
10. R.R. Goward Gerard van Eersel, 1771.
11. R.R. Ferdinand Maria Prince Lobkowitz, 1780. Died in exile at Munster, 1795.

VICARS-APOSTOLIC IN ENGLAND.

12. R.R. William Gibson, Bp. of Acanthus, V.A. of Northern District. (During the residence at Preston).
13. R.R. John Milner, Bp. of Castabala, V.A. of Midland District, 1811 to 1826, d. April 19.
14. R.R. Thomas Walsh, Bp. of Cambysopolis, V.A. of Midland District, 1826 to 1847.

BISHOPS OF BIRMINGHAM.

15. R.R. William Bernard Ullathorne, O.S.B., V.A., and afterwards 1st Bishop of Birmingham, 1848 to 1888, d. March 21st, 1889.
 16. R.R. Edward Ilsley, 2nd Bp. of Birmingham, 1888.
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CONFESSORS OF THE COMMUNITY.

1. Rev. William Vincent, April, 1624. Died Feb. 20th, 1660.
2. Rev. Christopher Green, March 14th, 1656, till 1658.
3. Rev. Michael Jenisone or Gerard, 1658 till 1662.
4. Rev. Francis Chamberleyne, June, 1663, till 1667.
5. Rev. Francis Green, 1667 till about 1712 or 1716.
6. Rev. Richard Daniel, between 1712 and 1716 till 1728.
7. Rev. James Whetenhall, May, 1728. Died March 2nd, 1773.
8. Rev. F. MacMahon, before 1782 till after 1790.
9. Rev. — Clowe. The last years at Ghent.
10. Rev. Robert Blaco, September, 1797, till 1811.

11. Rev. James Norman, February till November, 1811.
12. Rev. Robert Richmond, November 25th, 1811, till Sept., 1819.
13. Rev. Richard Hubbard, Sept., 1819, till 1830.
14. Rev. William Jones, 1830 till 1854. Died Aug. 21st, 1868.
15. Rev. Francis Fairfax, July 22nd, 1854, till October, 1889.
16. Rev. Terence Fitzpatrick, October 11th, 1889, till May 1st, 1890.
17. Rev. Frederic Crewe, May 13th, 1890.



No. 6. AUTOGRAPHS OF THE ABBESSES.

Lucie Knatchbull Abbess.	A.D. 1624 to 1629
Eugenia Pulton	1629 to 1642
Mary Kofier Abbatissa indigna	1642 to 1650
Maria Knatchbull Abbatissa	1650 to 1696
Fustina Petre Indigna	1696 to 1698
St. Magdalen Lucy Abbess	1698 to 1703
Scholastica Gerard	1703 to 1711
Mary Knatchbull	1711 to 1727
Cecilia Tydesley	1730 to 1736
Mary Magdalene Lucy Abbess	1736 to 1761
Marie Baptiste Phillips Abbess	1761 to 1781
Marie Magdalen Arden	1781 to 1797
Marie Francoise Hesketh	1797 to 1809
Mary Benedict Bedingfeld	1809 to 1811
Mary Alysia Jefferson	1811 to 1818

AUTOGRAPHS OF THE ABBESSES.—CONTINUED.

Mary Teresa Shuttleworth	1819 to 1837
Mary Juliana Forster	1837 to 1869
Mary Catharine Beech. Abbess.	1869

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